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OURISM

BUDDHA'S PAINTERS IN RIGOIN

SIGHTSEEING ALONG NANXI RIVER

GOLDEN SPRING IN LUOPING

TIANJIN — THE PORT CITY

213

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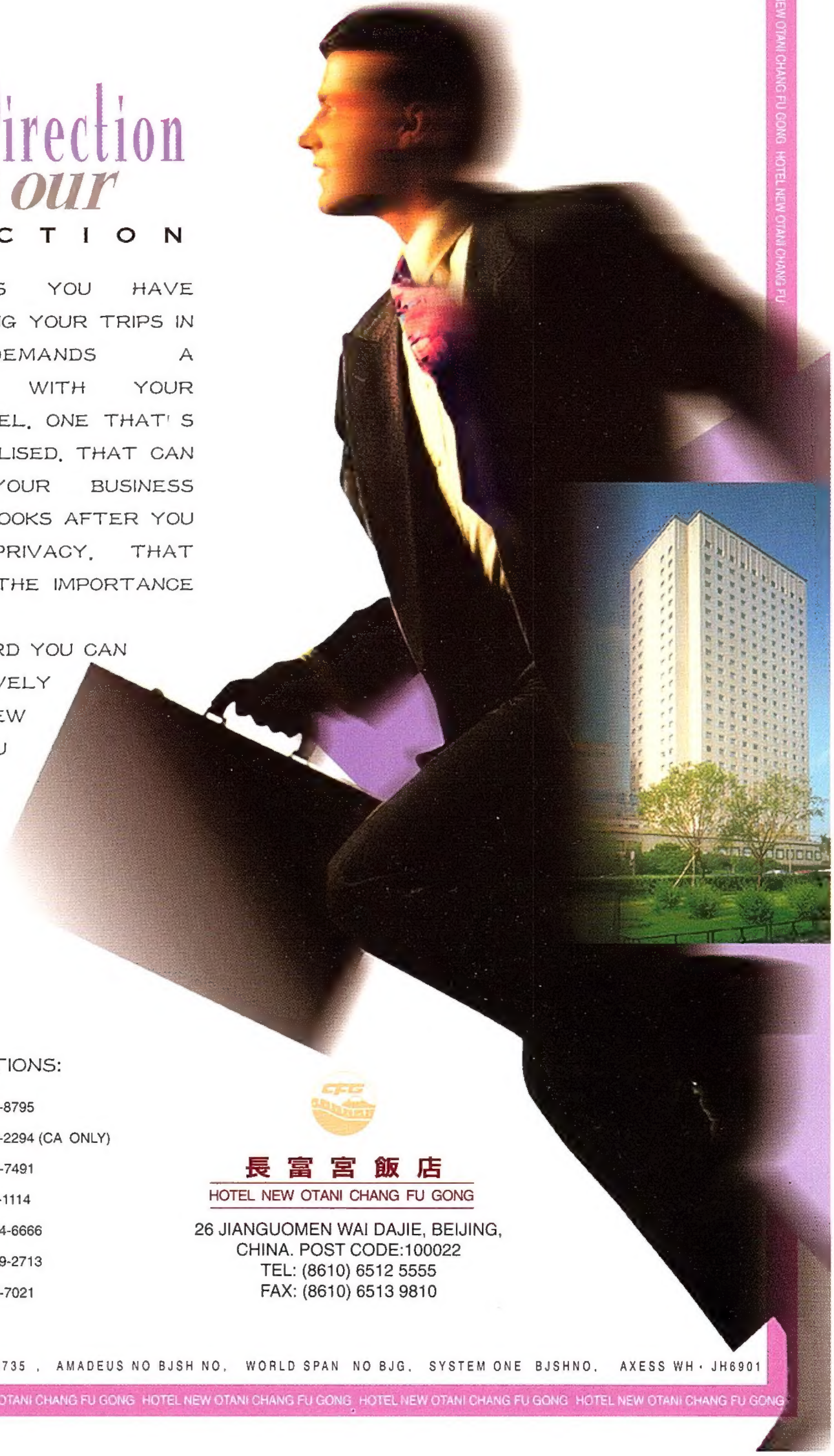

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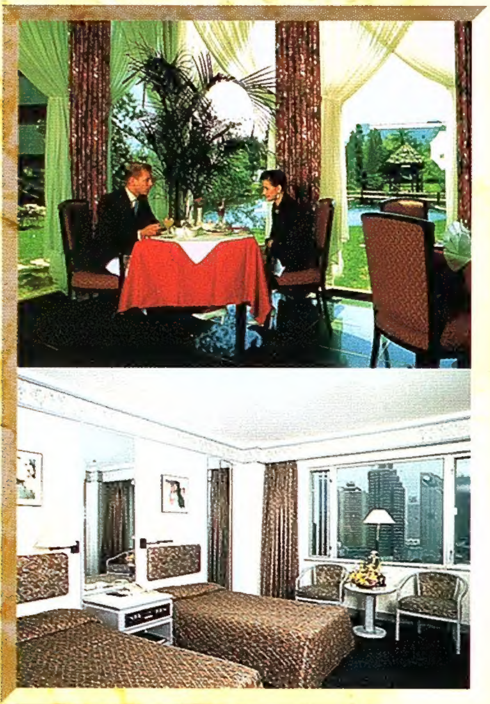

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HIGHLIGHTS

Nanxi River: Five Options for Sightseeing

Photos & Article by Shi Baoxiu

Along the Nanxi River in Zhejiang Province, there is a beautiful scenic area. To enjoy its natural beauty, unusual tranquillity and ancient simplicity, you can choose from five ways: bamboo rafting on the river, walking in the quiet valley, visiting the ancient villages, biking around the orchard and paddies, and worshipping Duke Tao and seeing other historical sites.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Ready for a Spring Tour

8

LANDSCAPES

Golden Spring in Southwest China

Photos by Liu Qianhua Article by Yuan Youxue

In Southwest China's Yunnan Province, there is a rapeseed producing area called Luoping. When the thousands of hectares of rape plants burst into full bloom in spring, the whole area turns to a golden ocean.

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CHALLENGES

Motorcycling Alone to Ejin in Inner Mongolia

Photos & Article by Chen Huai

It is not an easy trip for the author, who travelled alone riding his motorcycle through deserts and mountains, covering more than 2,000 kilometres. Yet he believes it was a worthy trip. Besides the breathtaking beauty of the Ejin autumn, he encountered many local people, Hans, Mongolians, farmers and herdsmen.

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NOVELTIES

Mysterious Ancient Cliff Dwellings

Photos by Zhai Dongfeng Article by Li Juemin

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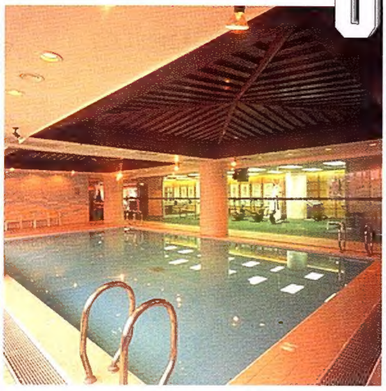
THE LANDMARK

OF BEIJING



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Situated in Beijing's commercial and cultural centre, it has foreign embassies on it's periphery and enjoys an amiable environment surrounded by green trees with views of the Liangma River.

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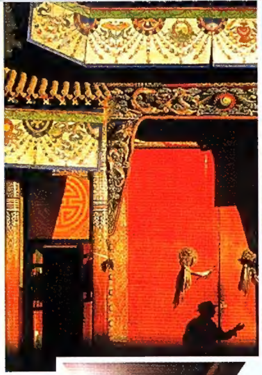
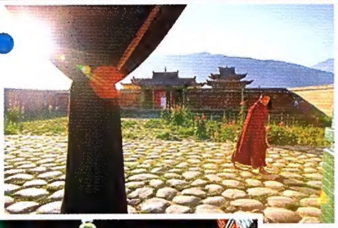


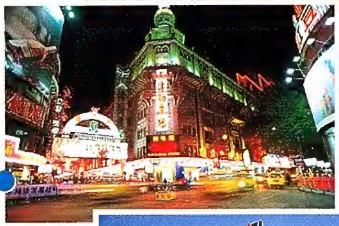
36 **DISCOVERIES**

Rigoin: Homeland of the Buddha's Painters

Photos & Article by Shi Baoxiu

In some villages in the Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai Province, almost everyone can paint or carve a Buddhist image, and every family earns a living selling art. In their village temples, you can find excellent collections of Buddhist art. Called Rigoin in Tibetan, the area is considered as homeland of Chinese Buddhist art.





66 **CITY PROFILE**

Tianjin – a Northern China Port City

Photos by Shan Xiaogang   Article by Gloria Shang

Tianjin is one of the four Chinese municipalities under the direct administration of the Central Government. It is also the country's second largest industrial and commercial city, next only to Shanghai. In many ways, Tianjin represents China's history of modernisation. A city tour will update you on both its colourful past and progressive present.

80 **HONG KONG**

Breeze and Waves at Western Big Wave Bay

Photos by Catherine Lee   Article by Zhi Lang

74 **PEOPLES**

The Mongolians — Warm and Generous People

Photos by Peng Zhenge and Ebo   Article by Iris Wong

One of the major Chinese ethnic groups, the Mongolians mostly maintain their nomadic life style. They live in movable yurts, eat beef, mutton and dairy produce as staple food, and are expert equestrians. Wrestling is one of their most popular sports. The majority of the Chinese Mongolians live in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in North China.

Shi Baoxiu

Cover: The gate of the Gasari Temple's side hall

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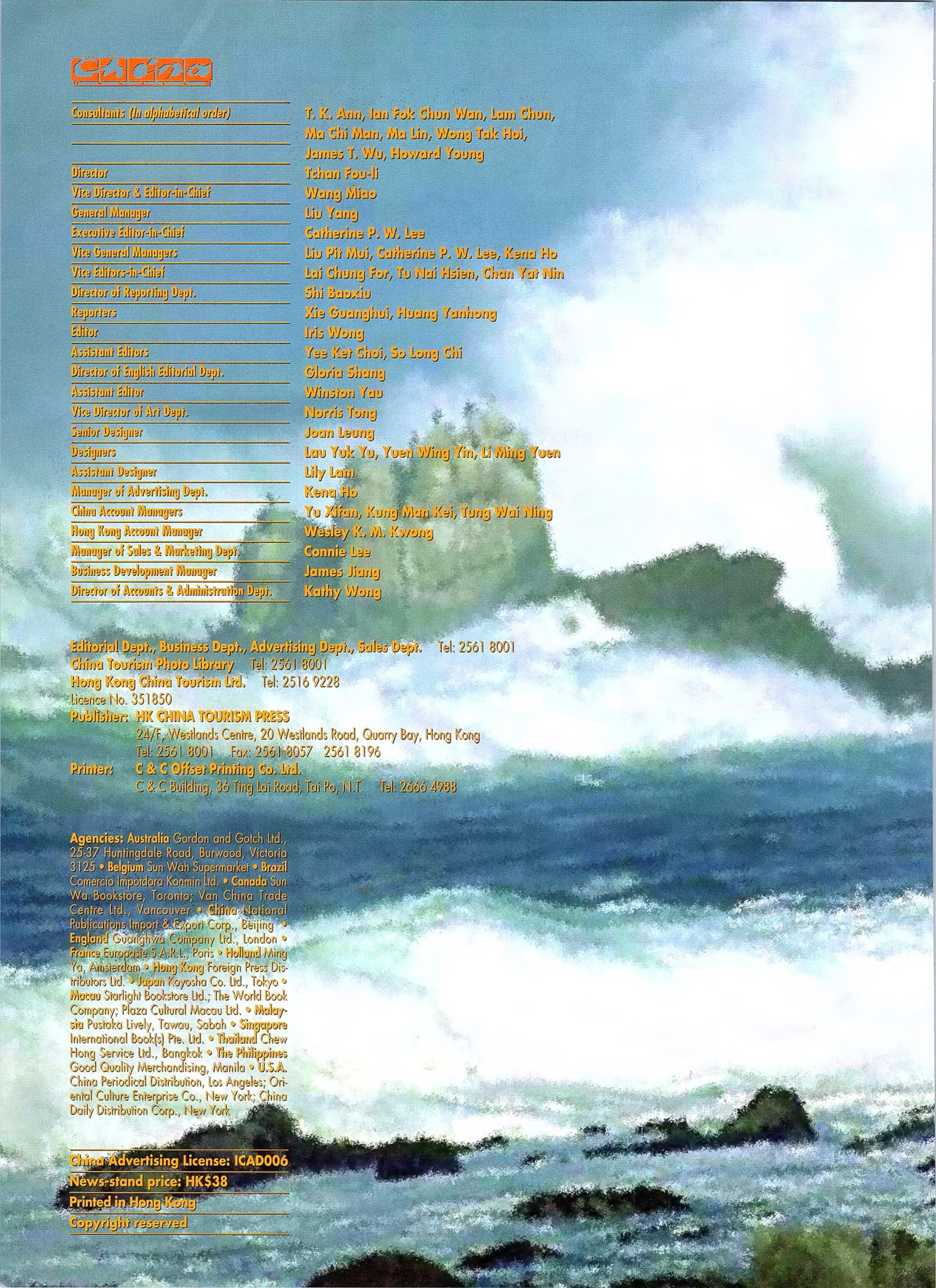

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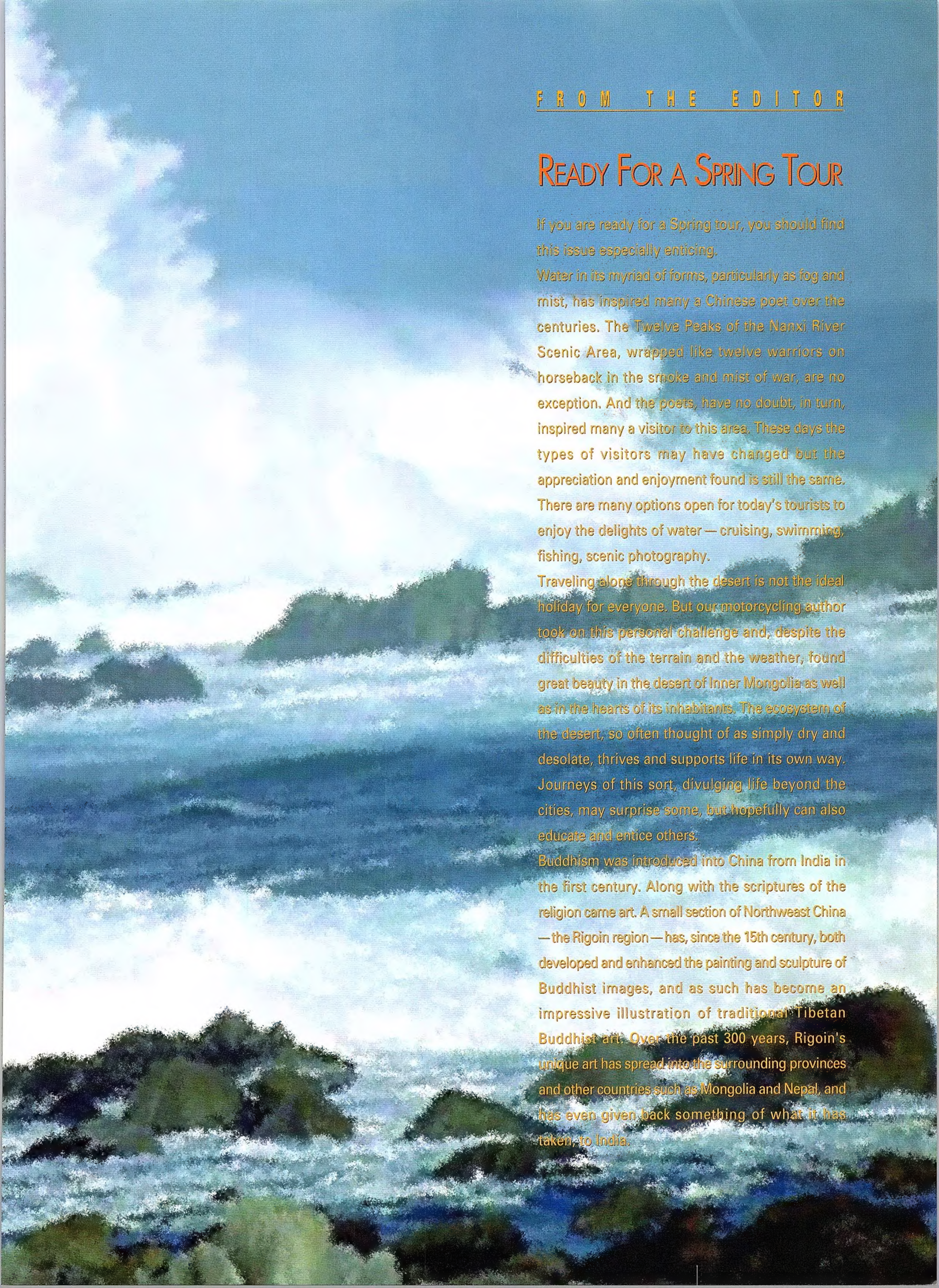


FROM THE EDITOR

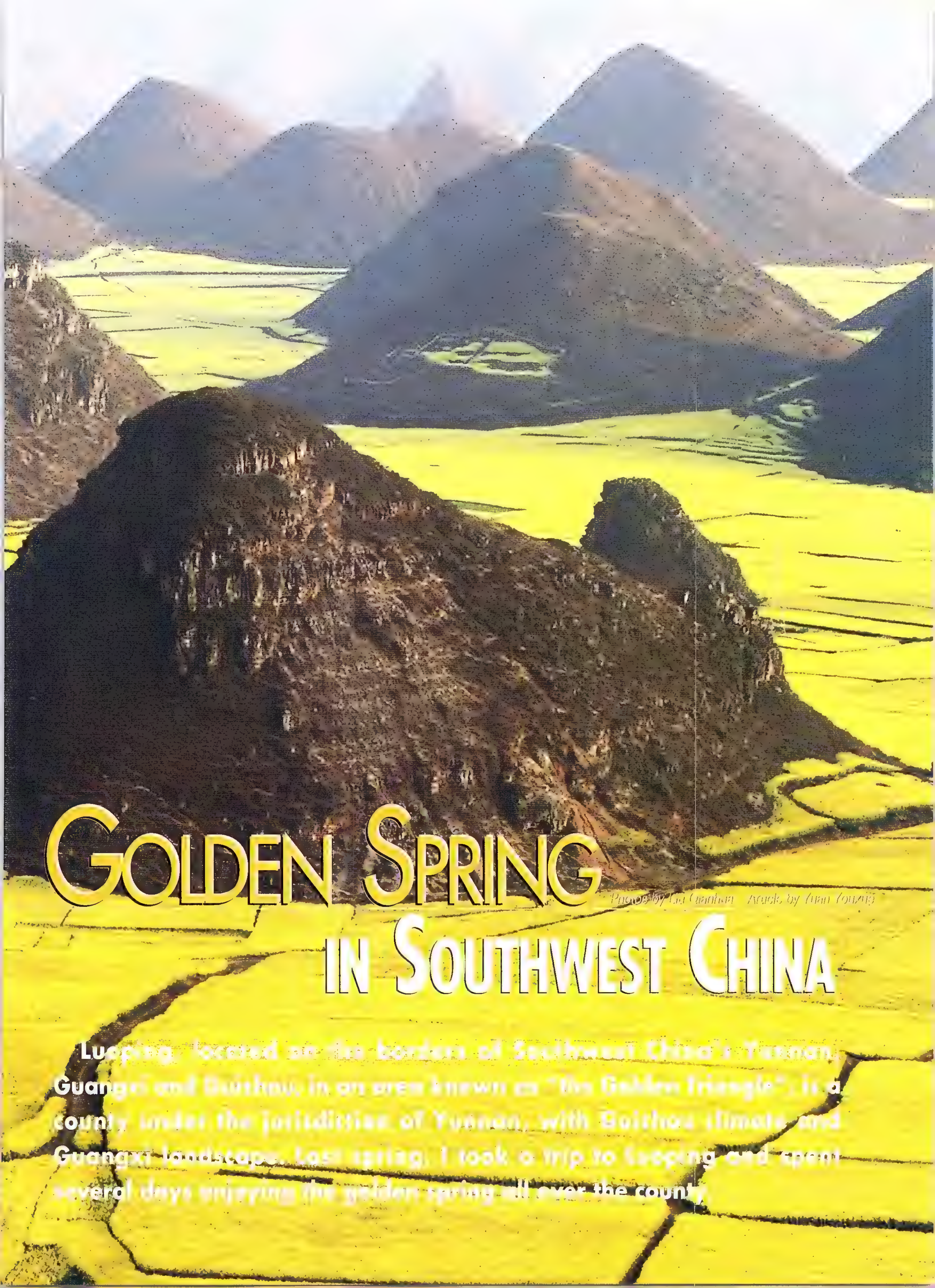
READY FOR A SPRING TOUR

If you are ready for a Spring tour, you should find this issue especially enticing.

Water in its myriad of forms, particularly as fog and mist, has inspired many a Chinese poet over the centuries. The Twelve Peaks of the Nanxi River Scenic Area, wrapped like twelve warriors on horseback in the smoke and mist of war, are no exception. And the poets, have no doubt, in turn, inspired many a visitor to this area. These days the types of visitors may have changed but the appreciation and enjoyment found is still the same. There are many options open for today's tourists to enjoy the delights of water — cruising, swimming, fishing, scenic photography.

Traveling alone through the desert is not the ideal holiday for everyone. But our motorcycling author took on this personal challenge and, despite the difficulties of the terrain and the weather, found great beauty in the desert of Inner Mongolia as well as in the hearts of its inhabitants. The ecosystem of the desert, so often thought of as simply dry and desolate, thrives and supports life in its own way. Journeys of this sort, divulging life beyond the cities, may surprise some, but hopefully can also educate and entice others.

Buddhism was introduced into China from India in the first century. Along with the scriptures of the religion came art. A small section of Northweast China — the Rigoin region — has, since the 15th century, both developed and enhanced the painting and sculpture of Buddhist images, and as such has become an impressive illustration of traditional Tibetan Buddhist art. Over the past 300 years, Rigoin's unique art has spread into the surrounding provinces and other countries such as Mongolia and Nepal, and has even given back something of what it has taken, to India.



GOLDEN SPRING IN SOUTHWEST CHINA

Photos by Lu Guanhua   Article by Yuan Youxing

Luoping, located on the borders of Southwest China's Yunnan, Guangxi and Guizhou, in an area known as "the Golden Triangle", is a county under the jurisdiction of Yunnan, with Guizhou climate and Guangxi landscape. Last spring, I took a trip to Luoping and spent several days enjoying the golden spring all over the county.

An Ocean of Flowers

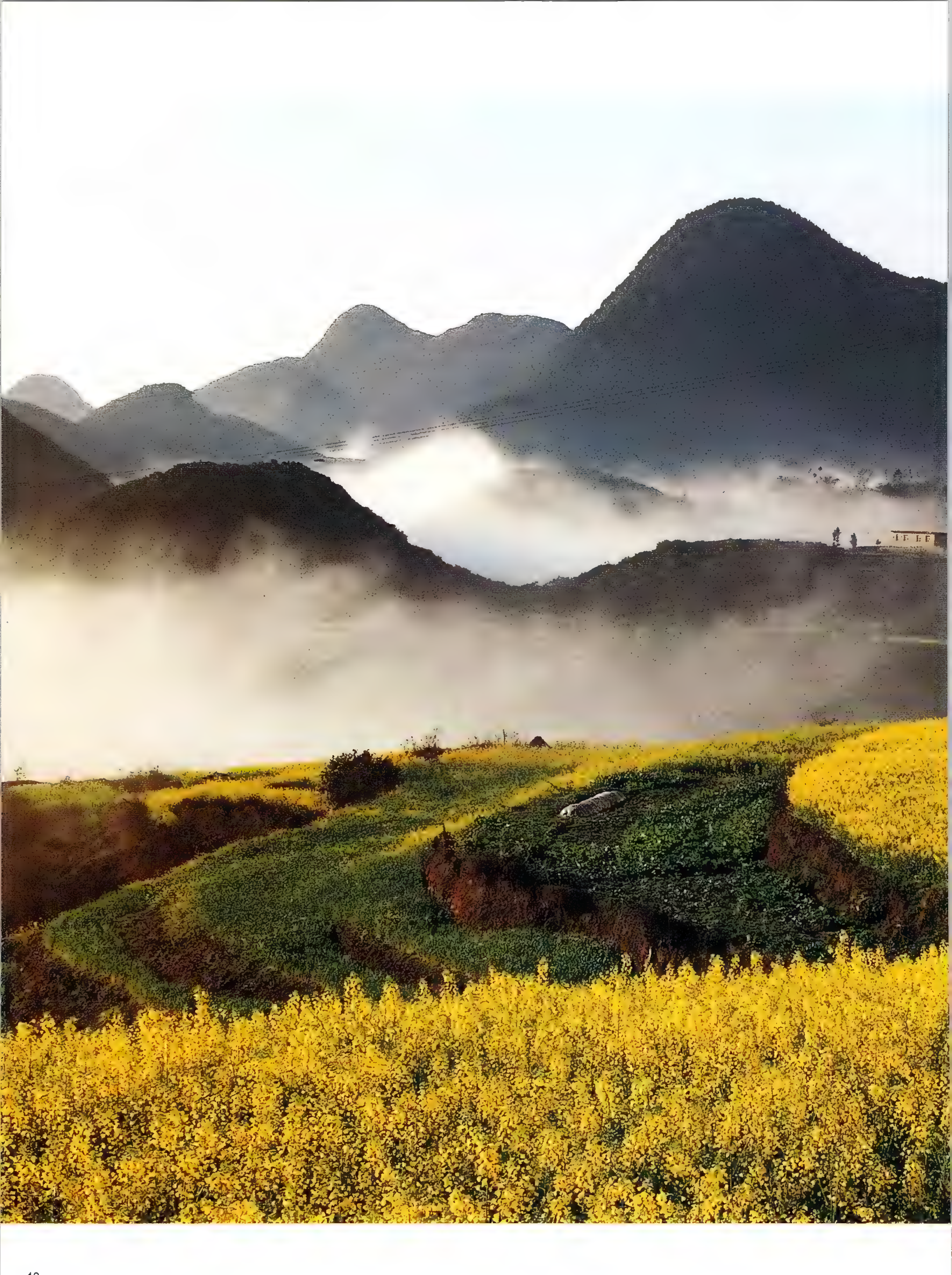
Luoping is one of the rapeseed producing areas in Yunnan and supplies a quarter of the rapeseed oil consumed in the whole province. There are nearly 10,000 hectares of rape plants in the flat land of Luoping. When they burst into full bloom in the spring months of March and April, the area is like a golden ocean that extends for several dozen kilometres. Even at a great distance, the air is laden with the sweet fragrance of this natural perfume.

On both sides of the highway that traverses the ocean of rape flowers, I saw bee-keepers from all parts of the country who had brought their beehives here for the flowers. I was told that these bee-keepers travelled to many parts of the country to chase after the flowers in different months of the year. After Luoping, they would go to Guangxi in March, Shaanxi in May and the highlands of Qinghai in June and July.

There are three small lakes -Yudai, Lashan and Wanzi -in the area. They are like three silvery mirrors inlaid among the golden flowers. In the background is the verdant Baila Mountain. The ocean of golden flowers is dotted here and there with villages like chess pieces and with elegant Guilin-style jagged hills rising abruptly from the flat ground to present an unusual and attractive picture.

Not far away from here is the Niujie limestone depression, a typical karst formation. The scenery there is striking and captivating.

Previous page: Small hills surrounded by rape flowers
1. The source of a group of waterfalls on the Nine-Dragon River
2. A busy bee-keeper



Spring on the Duoyi River

The Duoyi River, 40 kilometres south of the county town of Luoping, flows only 12 kilometres from its source. On this small river, one can see girls of the Buoyei ethnic group washing clothes on the river banks, boatmen poling bamboo rafts on the river, and Buoyei houses built on stilts half hidden in bamboo groves.

After travelling for two hours, we reached the three-river confluence at the borders of Yunnan, Guangxi and Guizhou, where the Duoyi, Huangni (Yellow Mud) and Qingshui (Clear Water) rivers join their courses and flow into the Red River and then to the Pearl River. The scenery is yet again different here.

Close to the Duoyi River is the Lubuge Three Gorges extending 19.8 kilometres. From a cruise boat, one can feast one' eyes on green mountains and sheer cliffs and on the stretches of stalagmites – your imagination can be stirred endlessly. There are water birds swooping over the water, and monkeys jumping in the trees. It is far from the mundane world we see daily.

Nine-Dragon Waterfalls

About 15 kilometres to the north of the county town is a group of waterfalls on the Nine-Dragon River, each with its own appeal, some awsome, some sinply pleasing to the eyes. The waterfalls cascade thunderously when flooding, but are less dramatic in spring.

Although Luoping is not grand, its varied and colourful scenery entice people to linger.

1. Rape flowers in the hills
2. The gurgling Duoyi River

2

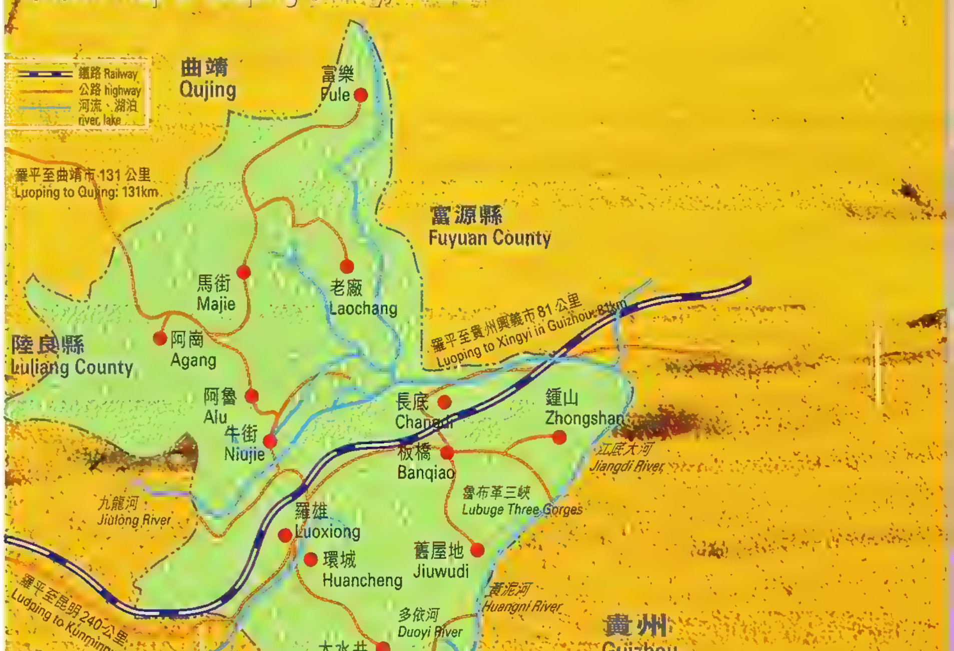
Tips for the Traveller

Transportation: Luoping is 240 kilometres from Kunming, capital of Yunnan and 80 kilometres from Xingyi in Guizhou Province. As the county is traversed by a highway and the Nanning-Kunming Railway, transportation is fairly convenient. Either by bus or by train, it can be reached in four hours from Kunming and in two hours from Xingyi. A long-distance coach service runs every day from Kunming to Xingyi and stops at Luoping. There are also a large number of buses and mini-buses going from Kunming and Xingyi to Luoping.

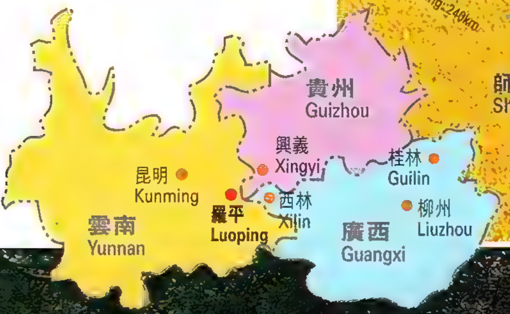
Lodging: There is a choice of high-grade or medium-grade hotels in the county town of Luoping. The rates for a standard room range from 140 yuan to 200 yuan.

1. Rape flowers and villages
2. A Buoyei family on the bank of the Duoyi River
3. Duoyi River in spring
4. Spring Waterfalls
5. Scenery at the Niujie limestone depression
6. Buoyei villages on the banks of the Duoyi River

雲南省羅平縣區示意圖
Sketch Map of Luoping County, Yunnan


鐵路 Railway
公路 highway
河流、湖泊 river, lake
曲靖 Qujing
富樂 Fule
羅平至曲靖市 131 公里 Luoping to Qujing: 131km
富源縣 Fuyuan County
馬街 Majie
老廠 Laochang
陸良縣 Luliang County
阿崗 Agang
羅平至貴州興義市 81 公里 Luoping to Xingyi in Guizhou: 81km
阿魯 Alu
長底 Changdi
鍾山 Zhongshan
牛街 Niujie
板橋 Banqiao
江底大河 Jiangdi River
魯布革三峽 Lubuge Three Gorges
九龍河 Jiulong River
羅雄 Luoxiong
舊屋地 Jiuwudi
環城 Huancheng
黃泥河 Huangni River
羅平至昆明 240 公里 Luoping to Kunming: 240km
多依河 Duoyi River
貴州 Guizhou
大水井 Dashuijing
八大河 Badahe
師宗縣 Shizong County
羅平至廣西西林縣 158 公里 Luoping to Xilin County, Guangxi: 158km
清水江 Qingshui River
廣西 Guangxi
南盤江 Nanpan River

雲南省羅平縣位置圖
Location map of Luoping County, Yunnan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雲南 Yunnan
廣西 Guangxi

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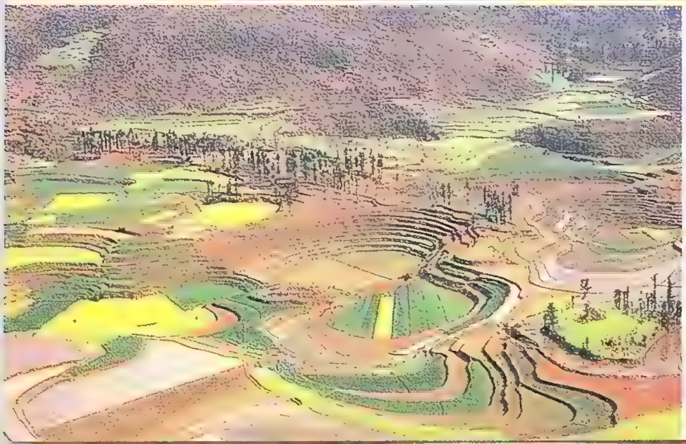

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Nanxi River: Five Options for Sightseeing

Rafting on the River

A Biking Tour

Photos & Article by Shi Baoxiu

Touring Through the Valley

Seeing Ancient Villages

Worshipping Duke Tao

Rafting on the River

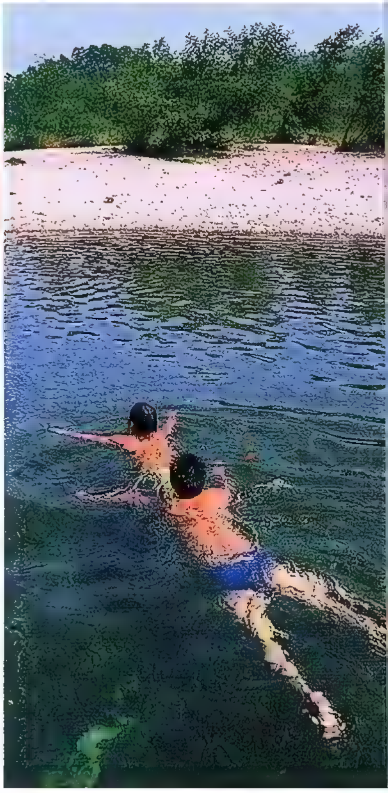
The Water Is as Clear as Floating Glass

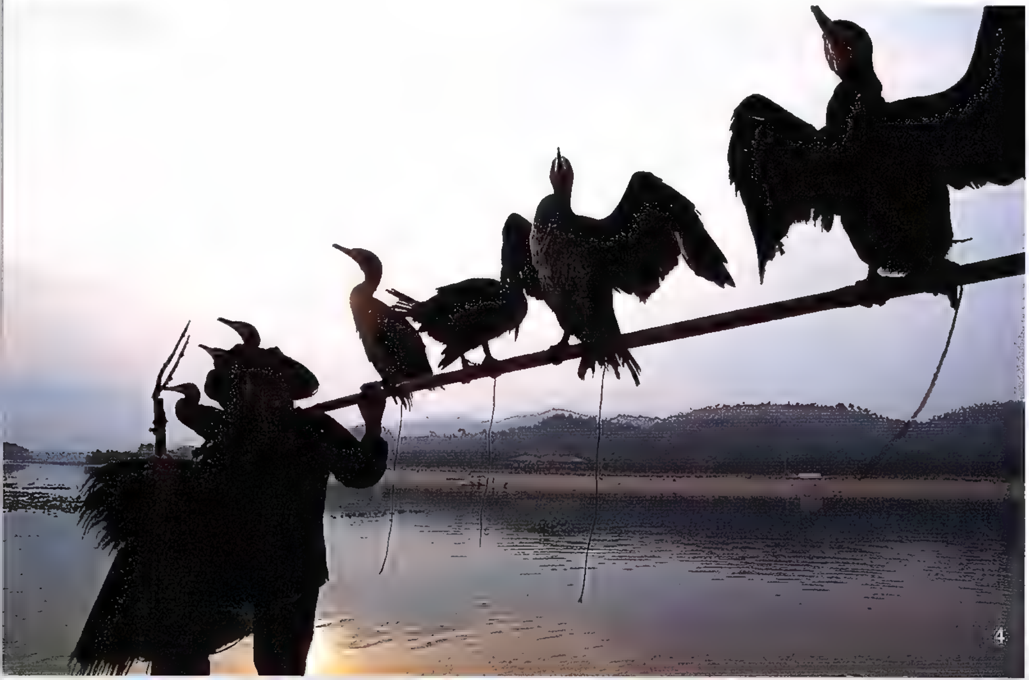
2

Going by bus along the highway upstream along the Nanxi River, you will find the murky river water clearing up gradually. Once you have passed the county seat of Yongjia, the river becomes visibly shallow and the water so lucid it makes you feel like travelling on liquid glass. At Lion Rock, the passengers leave the bus to begin their river cruise on bamboo rafts.

At this point, the river is wide and the water is as calm as a piece of well-ironed silk, except for tiny ripples suddenly stirred up by ducks swimming by. Here, afloat the river are more than a hundred bamboo rafts carrying colourfully-clad tourists enjoying their cruise. When sailing downstream through the rapids, the rafts bob up and down, causing excitement and fear in some passengers.

Beyond the section of roaring rapids, the river flows into a vast lake where the water is so deep that it looks dark green.

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1. An early morning on the banks of the river
2. A tourist spot on the Greater Nanxi Creek in summer
3. The crystal clear waters of Nanxi River
4. Partnership: the fisherman and his fishing hawks
5. A simple inn built in the groves on the bank
6. The Lion Rock sunset attracts many visitors.

5

6

Rafting on the River

In the middle of the lake stand two peaks. The larger one is covered with sturdy and thick green trees. It is hard to tell how the locals see a sitting lion in its shape, but they have named the hill Lion Rock. The area around it, however, does provide the best place to experience the morning view — small fishing boats with lamps gliding past, carrying fishermen and their hawks. Reflected by the gentle rippling water in the dim light, they add fascination to the tranquil morning scene.

In summer, the Lion Rock is busy and lively with boating, rafting, swimming, fishing, picnicking activities. Some people simply lie on a rented reclining bamboo chair enjoying the quiet atmosphere in the groves by the river.

If you want to experience the tranquillity and beauty of the rural scenery along the river, go further upstream, passing the town of Yantou and boarding a bamboo raft at Dutou Wharf. The pleasure is indescribable. The water here is even clearer, with black and white pebbles visible on the river bed. Rice paddies and groves stretch along the banks. Occasionally, you see boys riding buffaloes strolling by leisurely. There is virtually no other sound to be heard except of bamboo poles churning the water and the bellowing of the buffaloes. Sometimes the monotonous quiet is broken by passengers singing love songs.

Now and then massive flocks of white ducks jam the waterway ahead, screeching deafeningly. Suddenly, the boatmen push hard on their bamboo poles and dock the rafts. People then go ashore and take a walk. The trees are so thick in this vast forest there seems to be no end.

The sun barely shines through the soft grass on the ground. Thoughts now shift to swaying gently in a hammock among the trees.

Touring Through the Valley

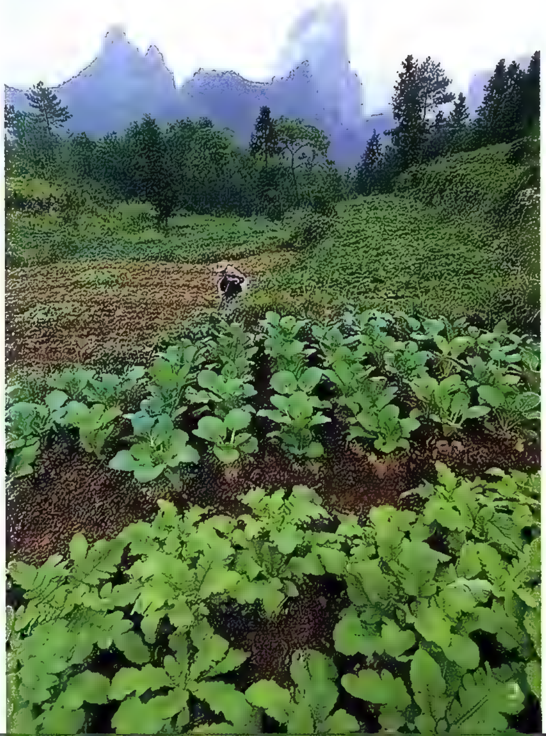
Trails, Ferries, Stone Staircases and Rattan Bridges

Shuttle mini-buses run between Lion Rock and Shiwei (Stone Mast) Rock, and along the way are wonderful views: clear streams, bamboo groves, rural cottages, suspension bridges, waterfalls, graceful peaks and sheer cliffs. The first view that greets the eye in the valley is the towering Stone Mast Rock rising abruptly into the sky. One cannot help admiring nature's creativity in placing such a tall, solitary peak in this flat wilderness.

The Stone Mast Rock Scenic Area has just been opened to tourists, and all the groves, creeks and villages still retain their natural beauty. I had lunch that day at the house of Mr. Luo, director of the scenic area administration. He had been running a rural restaurant for two or three years. His wife, a native, cooked all the typical local dishes, making use of wild vegetables, bamboo shoots, taro, sweet potatoes, river crabs and pheasant, served with home-made glutinous rice wine. The warm wine, somewhat sour and really strong, contained a red bayberry. One cup and my face was as red as the berry!

After lunch, we walked through a bamboo grove, crossed a clear creek and, taking a shaded path, entered a deep valley, the reputed Lesser Three Gorges. The mountain creeks here converge to form a deep pool surrounded by sheer cliffs. Luckily, there was a plank path along the cliff, guiding visitors to a deep pool at the end. The cliffs on both sides of the valley seemed to close in, revealing no way out.

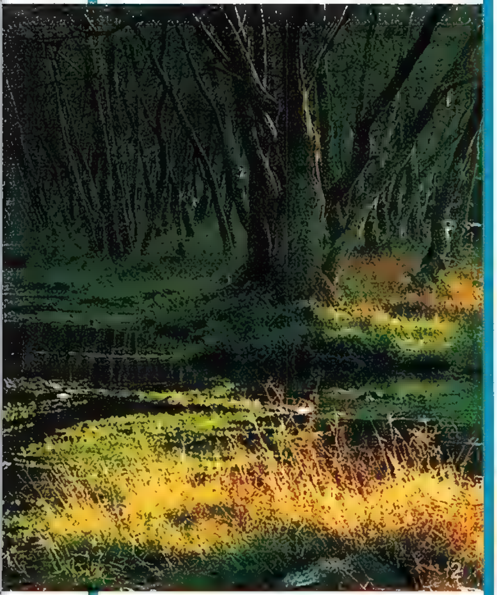
We crossed the deep water to find the opposite section of the valley much more open. Blossoming wild flowers, green grass and sturdy trees filled the area around the creek and a mountain path meticulously paved with pebbles. This path was highly



1. **The scenery along the river offers many photo opportunities**
2. **Dense forests line the river banks (by Ye Xinren)**
3. **Green vegetables are grown in the mountains.**

The Nanxi River — Clear Waters and Refreshing Air

Article by Zhang Hongbo



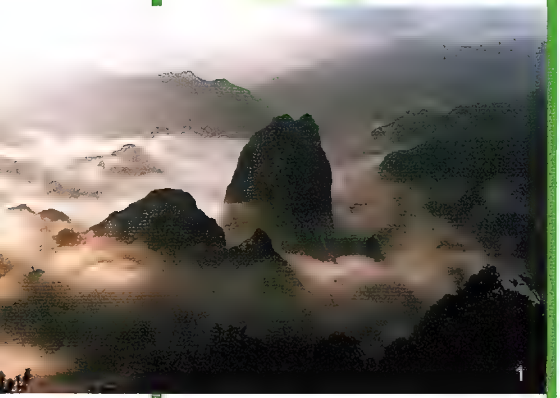
Tests show that the Nanxi water meets the national standards for first-class water. No wonder the water is so transparent that you can clearly see the pebbles on the river bed.

The river is wide but is shallow, averaging one metre. The river course twists and turns, with 36 bends and 72 shoals, never too slow nor too turbulent. Even at the shoals the water flow is relatively gentle, making the Nanxi an ideal place for cruising and sightseeing particularly on a bamboo raft.

The beach groves are unique to the Nanxi. Consisting of a mixture of bamboo, pine, maple, poplar and fruit trees, the groves stand just like green barriers, forming a fascinating scenic attraction. Recommended areas include those at the Lesser Nanxi, Xinan, West Bank, Xiahongtou, Jiuzhang and Taiping Rock. Largest of all, the Taiping Rock Grove, covers 20 hectares. In the groves, you can enjoy a moment of undisturbed life on a hammock, or have a nice picnic....

Touring Through the Valley

Governor Xie and the Nanxi River



At Yongjia on the Nanxi River, the striking landscape has nurtured many famous scholars in Chinese history. One of them is Xie Lingyun, a Southern-dynasties (420-589) poet who served as magistrate of Yongjia. After he took office, he was not satisfied with his status and had no intention of doing a serious job. So, he travelled a great deal discovering the beauty of the waters and peaks and then became the first Chinese poet writing of mountains and rivers. As the Almanac of Yongjia County records: "From then on, the mountains and rivers here became famous. And visitors still compose poems praising the scenery."

acclaimed for its use of local materials, and for the fact that it is flat, rather inconspicuous, and blends well with its natural surroundings.

Further on, sheer cliffs again towered over a deep valley of jagged rocks and waterfalls. Another opening and another lake were awaiting ahead.

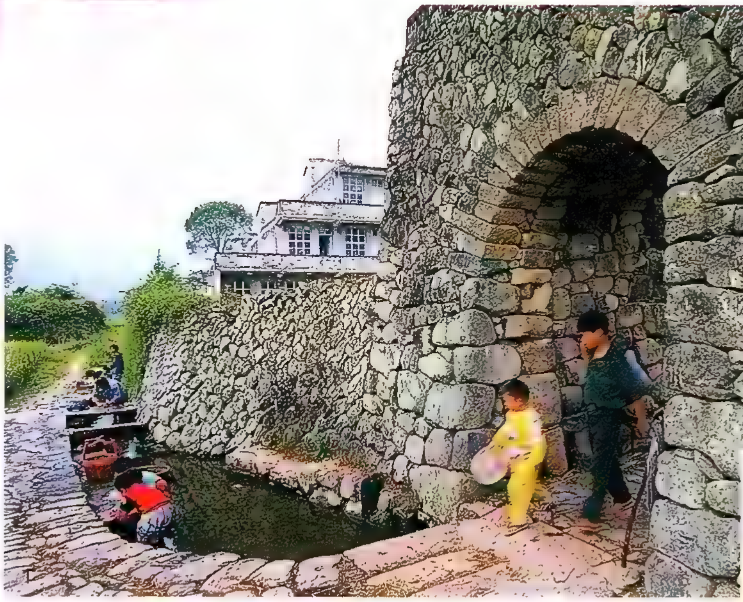
1. The ethereal beauty of the Nanxi River has inspired many famous poets in Chinese history. (by Ye Xinren)
2. A bridge with a style of its own
3. This plank pathway along the cliff leads deep into the valley.
4. The Shiwei (Stone Mast) Rock

3

1. The ancient gate of Furong Village
2. Helping out with household chores (by Ye Xinren)
3. The classical design of a residential house
4. As the village itself, the well is antiquated too.

Seeing Ancient Villages:

Pebble Roads, Pebble Archway, Pebble Well



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The Nanxi River runs through many ancient villages, including Furong (Hibiscus), Cangbo (Green Slope), Huatan (Flowery Flatland), Langxia (Corridor) and Pengxi (Covered Creek), and many others.

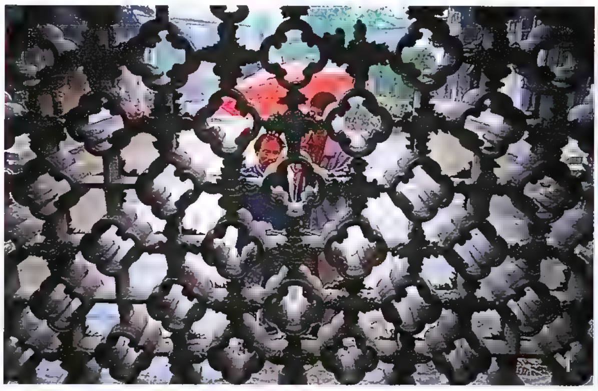
In Hibiscus Village, everything is made of stone; walking on the pebbled paths with thin-soled shoes will make one's feet ache very soon. High-heeled shoes are even more difficult.

Green Slope Village has a long history, dating back to the Song Dynasty (960-1279). The designers of this village ingeniously created a layout based on the "four treasures of the study" – ink stick, ink slab, paper and writing brush. The rectangular pool in the village is in the shape of an ink slab. The five-metre-long stone bench by the pool resembles the ink stick. A grey-brick paved road that cuts straight through the entire village symbolises the writing brush. And the paper? The general square layout of the houses!

Covered Creek Village, on the way to Stone Mast Rock, is said to be the hometown of the descendants of the noted Southern-dynasties poet Xie Lingyun. Although many structures are derelict, a residence that once belonged to a Ming-dynasty scholar retains a section of "flowery wall" whose upper wall is built with sculptured bricks.

Seeing Ancient Villages:

1. This Ming-dynasty wall survived a serious fire.
2. Exquisite roof sculptures
3. Designs on ancient tiles
4. An ancient sedan used for wedding ceremonies displayed in the Cangpo Village Folklore Museum
5. The Wind and Rain Pavilion
6. Pengxi Creek
7. Opera performances are often staged in the Ancestral Hall of Furong Village (by Ye Xinren)



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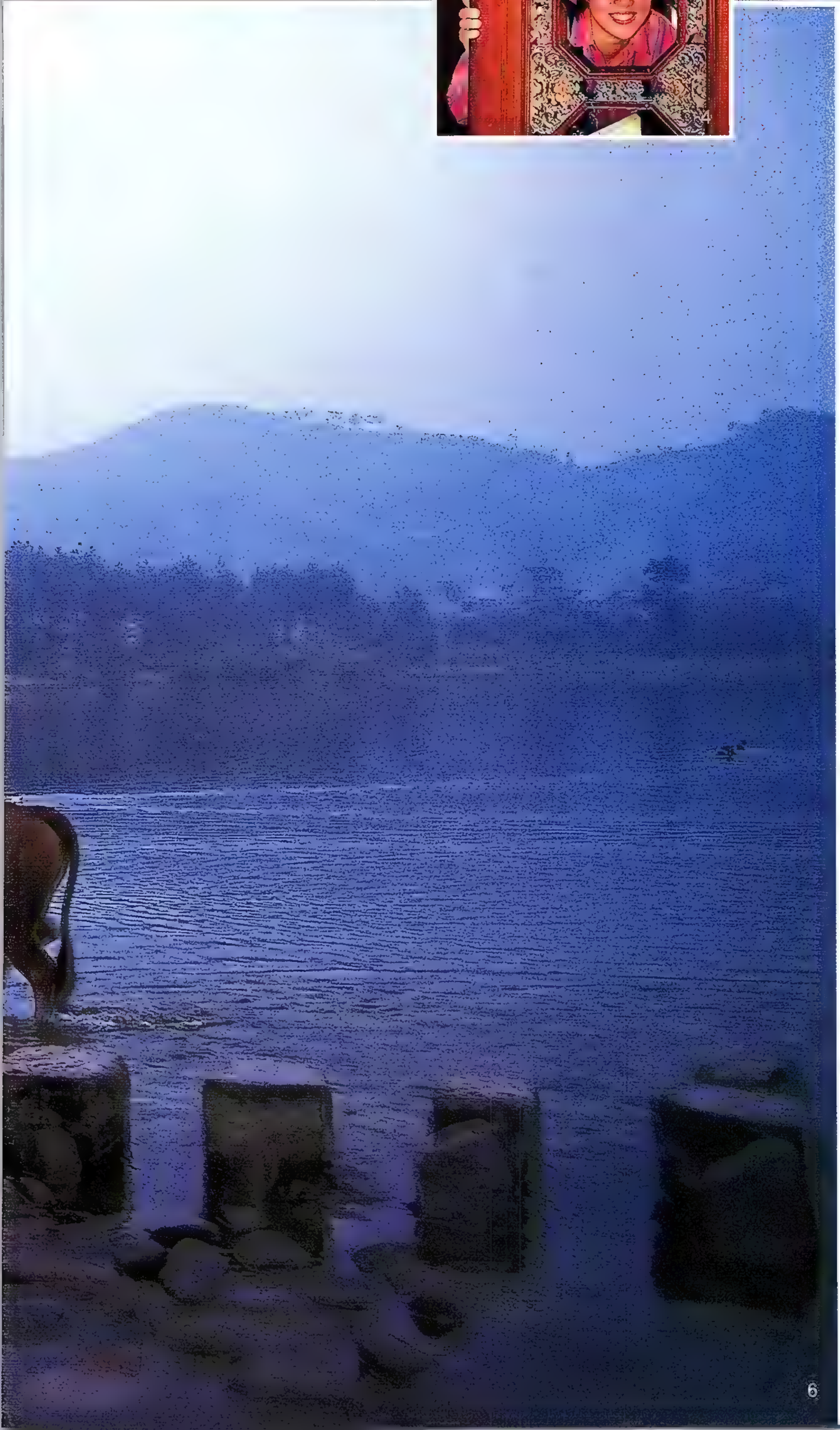
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Ancient Stone Villages

Article by Zhang Hongbo

7

Many ancient villages along the Nanxi River have well preserved buildings dating back to the Song (960-1279), Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. What makes these rural villages special is their rich cultural traditions.

Residential houses along the Nanxi display a natural and simple ancient architectural style. Usually a wood and stone structure, the wooden part is left bare — no paint or varnish. What deserves special mention is that pebbles from the Nanxi River were used as building materials for village walls, arched gates, and courtyard screens, and to pave roads and courtyards.

Since the Tang Dynasty (618-907), these rural villages have nurtured many outstanding men of letters. From the Tang to the Qing dynasties, at least 50 local scholars were successful candidates in the highest imperial exams.

Worshipping Duke Tao

Praying for Peace and Safety

In the Nanxi River Scenic Area, Daruo Crag attracts more visitors than any other single site. It is a short trip from the city of Wenzhou to Daruo Crag. After taking a north-bound ferry across the Oujiang River at Anlanting, change to a minibus at Oubei Town and in 30 minutes you will arrive at Daruo Crag. The towering cliffs stand at attention like the guardians in Buddhist tales.

Look carefully and you will find that the hill is actually a huge cave with a wide opening. Though there is quite a large temple building at the entrance, it is still a long way from the bottom up to the cave. It is so dark inside that it is difficult to judge its real size. Thick mist curls up from the overhead opening, clouding the trees on the hilltop. This is the famous Duke Tao's Cave.

A natural stone chamber, the cave is 56 metres high, 76 metres wide and 80 metres deep, big enough to hold about a thousand people. The cave has two levels; the top level, known as the Heavenly Terrace, is the ground for the Hall of Duke Hu. The lower level is more spacious, complete with towers, terraces, pavilions and halls. There is also a rather complete collection of sculptures of Sakyamuni, the Goddess of Mercy, and of the Buddhist guardians and arhats.

The cave is packed to capacity on the first and 15th of each lunar month. Then, the deep, dark cave is lit up with nearly 10,000 red candles. There are so many people eager to light a candle and pray for protection from the gods and for good fortune that every three minutes after candles are lit, they have to be removed to make space for the fresh ones of new worshippers.

1. This bronze statue guards the entrance to Tao's Cave
2. Tao's Cave is the home of deities, Buddha and Taoist immortals
3. Entrusting their fate to the deities

About Duke Tao

Duke Tao's Cave is a large cave on Daruo Crag and the single greatest attraction on the hill. So who was Duke Tao? The answer is a long story. During the period of the Qi and Liang States of the Southern Dynasties (about 479-557), there lived a man named Tao Hongjing who first served as a court official, then a general of the State of Qi. Tao left his official post and became a Taoist monk at Daruo Crag. He did not idle away his time though; he wrote a book which became a Taoist classic. He also advised the kings and emperors on government when they visited him. So people referred to him as the "Mountain Prime Minister". It was hard to tell whether he really wanted to live in seclusion or was simply buying his time for a political comeback.

Today, though the cave has such an attractive name, there is no trace of Duke Tao. Instead, a statue dedicated to Duke Hu, a legendary emperor, stands on the terrace greeting pilgrims today.

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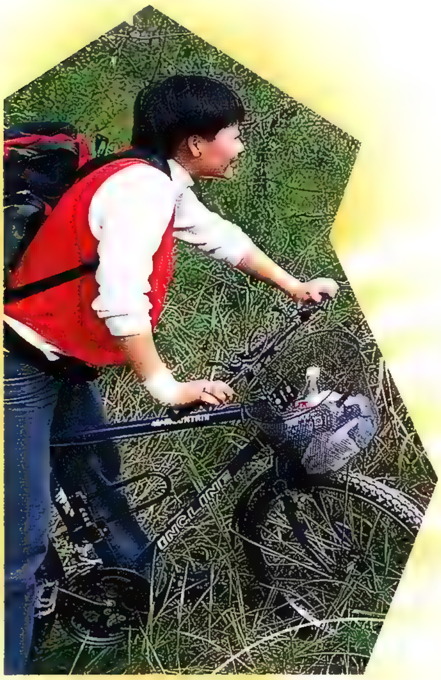


A Biking Tour

Tasting Fresh Fruits, Cutting Rice, Leaving Traces in the Fields

The recommended biking trip starts off from Daruo Crag to Twelve Peaks, which takes about two hours. On this section, you bike along a wild trail to the foot of the hills, where you park the bike and climb up to see the sites.

To bike to Shimentai (Stone Gate Terrace), you take the flat cement-surface highway. Most of the visitors take tricycles at Taogong (Duke Tao) Cave, and after a slightly more than 20-minute slow ride across a bridge, they arrive outside the entrance to a scenic area. Here, they dismount to ascend the mountain, or descend into the deep valley to look for the nine waterfalls.

A typical biking trip begins at Daruo Crag, and goes through the narrow paths between the fields in the mountain valley to the Twelve Peaks. From here, you turn back onto a main road, take a right turn to Stone Gate Terrace, and then have a romantic picnic at the foot of the waterfalls. Next, you ride out of the mountain and travel along a main road. On one side of the road the trees are laden with oranges and grape fruits. And if you happen to be there in autumn when the fruits are ripening, you will find the oranges here as big as fists and the grapefruits as large as a man's head. Their very appearance makes one's mouth water. Why not simply get off your bike, buy a few freshly picked fruits and eat to your heart's content?

A section of the trip cuts through a mountainside where you have to push your bike. Fortunately, this part of the journey only takes about 10 minutes. After that, you ride down a long mountain slope, and all you have to do is keep a firm and steady grip on the handlebar and let the bike race down all the way to the Yaxiaku Scenic Area. Much of the valley is planted with rice, and during the harvesting season visitors are welcome to try their hand at rice cutting.

Yaxiaku (Under-Cliff Warehouse) is actually a sealed stone valley with sheer cliffs on all four sides. You have to walk carefully along a path chiselled out on the mountain slope before you can reach the bottom of the valley. Looking up, you cannot help having the feeling of all sides crashing in on you. A thin stream of water comes down from the top of the hill, falls on the bottom of the pit, sinks into the layer of pebbles and entirely disappears. This is an ideal summer resort!

1. Touring Nanxi River on a bicycle
2. A break at river's edge
3. Qiji Fall is another interesting stop for tourists.

2

1

The Stone Gate Terrace and the Water Falls

Article by Zhang Hongbo

The Stone Gate Terrace and its nine waterfalls are found in the valley not far from Daruo Crag. A mountain stream meanders down the mountain slope to the deep valley thick with trees, creating a series of nine waterfalls of varying size in the course of merely two kilometres.

The first fall is located at the valley entrance and the water drop is about 30 metres. People refer to it as the curtain of the Stone Gate Terrace. The other falls are all individually impressive – one splashes vigorously down into a pool, one merely dribbles down the rocks, while another emerges from part of the Stone Gate resembling an elephant's trunk.

3

2

1. **A steep climb up in Twelve Peaks**
2. **Home-made noodles**
3. **An unusual drinking utensil**
4. **Picking grapefruit in an orchard**
5. **Harvesting rice**
6. **Having lunch by the Flying Falls Pond**
7. **Twelve Peaks in morning mist**

Soon after turning back to the main road, you will find yourself on the bank of the Lesser Nanxi River. From this point onward, the highway and the river run parallel up to Daruo Crag. Compared with the Nanxi River, the Lesser Nanxi is even clearer and more tranquil. The river is as calm as a mirror, providing ever clearer reflections of the clouds, riverside groves and distant hills.

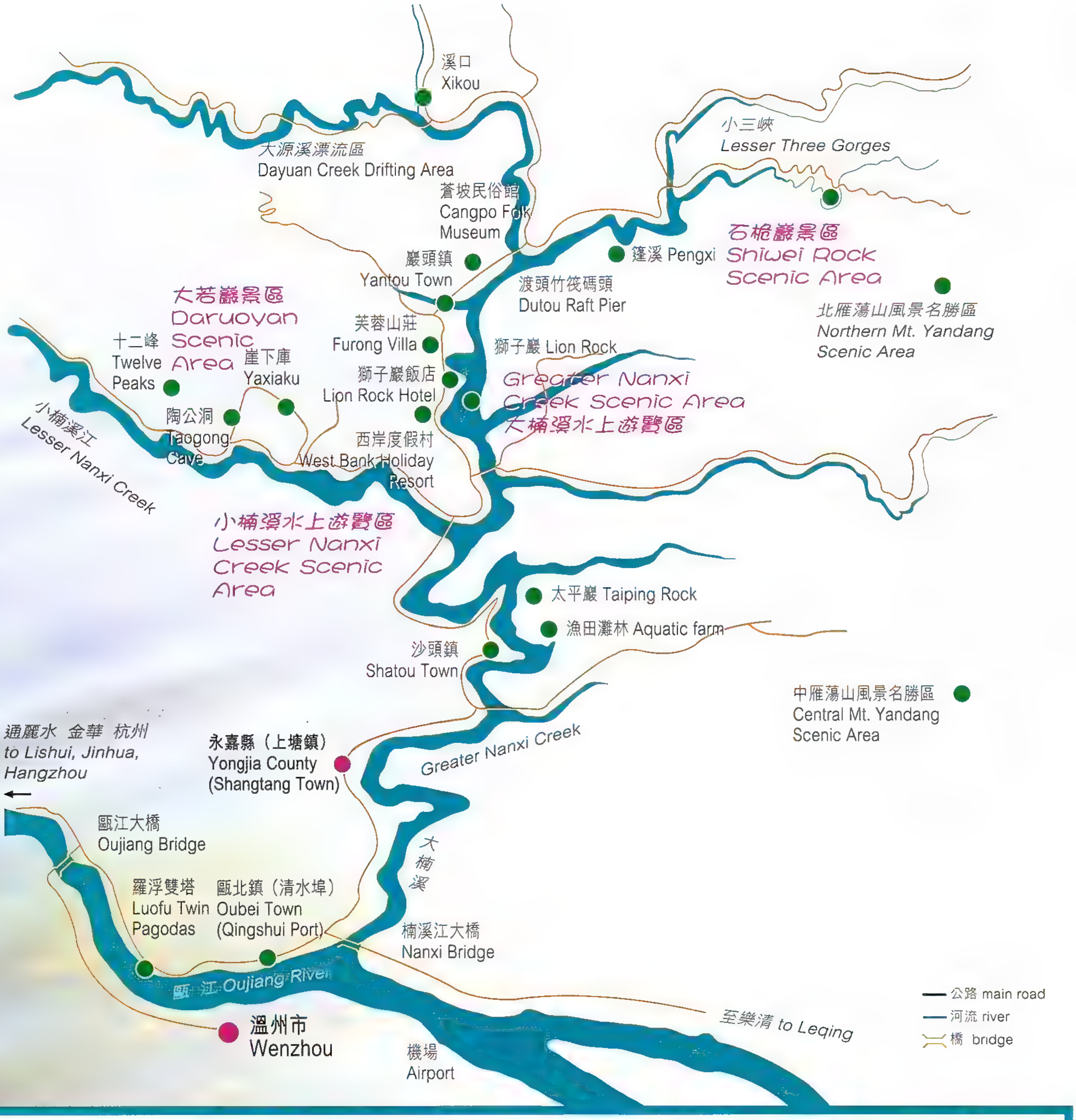
Translated by F. Huang

The Twelve Peaks

The Twelve Peaks are about three kilometres from Daruo Crag. The cluster of 12 mountain peaks rise up abruptly from the ground, each having a unique shape.

At the Twelve Peaks, every step you take offers a different view. In the rain, or just after it stops, when the fog and mist are heavy, the Twelve Peaks are wrapped like 12 warriors travelling on horseback in the smoke and mist of war. Ancient men of letters have given each of the peaks a beautiful name: the Incense Burner, Celestial Palm, the Heavenly Peak, the Lotus, the Banner, the Stalagmite, the Horizontal Zither, the Treasure Pack, the Rhinoceros Horn, the Stone Tablet and the Boy. Or, simply use your own imagination and discover new images.

Nanxi River Travel Tips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大源溪漂流區
Dayuan Creek Drifting Area
蒼坡民俗館
Cangpo Folk Museum
巖頭鎮
Yantou Town
小三峽
Lesser Three Gorges
蓬溪 Pengxi
石桅巖景區
Shiwei Rock Scenic Area
渡頭竹筏碼頭
Dutou Raft Pier
北雁蕩山風景名勝區
Northern Mt. Yandang Scenic Area
大若巖景區
Daruoyan Scenic Area
十二峰
Twelve Peaks
崖下庫
Yaxiaku
芙蓉山莊
Furong Villa
獅子巖 Lion Rock
獅子巖飯店
Lion Rock Hotel
Greater Nanxi Creek Scenic Area
大楠溪水上遊覽區
陶公洞
Taogong Cave
西岸度假村
West Bank Holiday Resort
小楠溪江
Lesser Nanxi Creek
小楠溪水上遊覽區
Lesser Nanxi Creek Scenic Area
太平巖 Taiping Rock
漁田灘林 Aquatic farm
沙頭鎮
Shatou Town
中雁蕩山風景名勝區
Central Mt. Yandang Scenic Area
通麗水 金華 杭州
to Lishui, Jinhua, Hangzhou
永嘉縣（上塘鎮）
Yongjia County (Shangtang Town)
Greater Nanxi Creek
甌江大橋
Oujiang Bridge
大楠溪
羅浮雙塔
Luofu Twin Pagodas
甌北鎮（清水埠）
Oubei Town (Qingshui Port)
楠溪江大橋
Nanxi Bridge
甌江 Oujiang River
溫州市
Wenzhou
機場
Airport
至樂清 to Leqing
公路 main road
河流 river
橋 bridge

Best time: It is suitable from March to November, but spring and summer are best seasons.

Transport: By air from Hong Kong to Wenzhou (Monday and Thursday), or from Guangzhou or Shenzhen to Wenzhou (every day). Take a bus from Wenzhou to Yongjia. There are tourist buses from Yongjia to each scenic sites – Lion Rock, Daruo Rock, Yantou Town and Shiwei Rock. Motor tricycle and tricycle transport are available between scenic spots.

Food and accommodation: Restaurants specialising in Wenzhou-flavour dishes can be found at all scenic spots. At Shiwei Rock you can find food at local farmsteads. At Lion Rock, many restaurants offer accommodation on their upper floor with a price of 30 yuan per bed. Lion Rock Hotel and Furong Mountain Villa charge 200-500 yuan per room. At Daruo Rock, Daruo Rock Guesthouse and Youdian (Telecommunications) Villa charges 150-200 yuan per room.

Bamboo rafts for hire: Long journey (from Dutou to Lion Rock) costs 150 yuan; short journey (touring around Lion Rock) costs 40 yuan. Each raft carries four passengers.

Bicycles for hire: To hire bicycles, please contact Nanxi Creek Travel Agency by phone (715 1676 or 715 1211). For a bicycle tour, you'd better choose smooth paths such as that to Cangpo and Furong villages, and that around Lion Rock and Daruo Rock.

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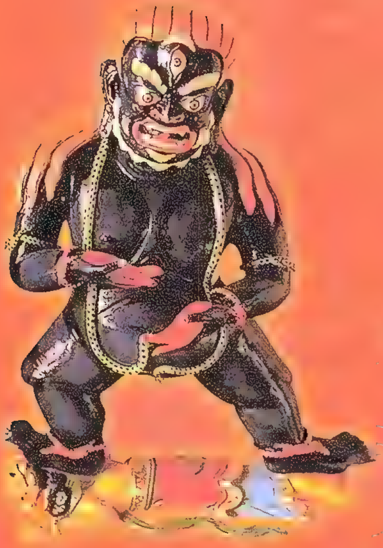
Rigoin: Homeland of the Buddha's Painters

Photo & Article by Shi [illegible]



It is a Buddhist paradise — where colours flow, and gold sparkles. Between the barren mountains of Qingha-Tibet and Loess plateaus, and the canyon south of the Yellow River, religious passion ensures the ubiquitous presence of Buddha, gods, goddesses demons, beasts birds and flowers, all painted in a kaleidoscope of colours.

Nyingka Gyal, a Tibetan fluent in Chinese and familiar with the people and art of Rigoin, is a 30-year-old security clerk in Huangnan Prefectural Hotel. Seemingly eager to put me on the right track to understanding Tibetan Buddhist art, he brought me directly to the Rigoin Art Gallery of Huangnan Prefecture, then introduced me to the master painter, Khyi Kyag.

Khyi Kyag is a middle-aged professional painter with the gallery. Though he could speak heavily-accented, but understandable Chinese he could not write the language, so he had to write his articles in Tibetan first. These were then translated into Chinese for publishing in newspapers and magazines.

Nursing a bowl of hot buttered tea and munching buttered buns, we listened to Khyi Kyag's story. Khyi Kyag was tonsured as a novice in Gasari Temple when he was eight. His master happened to be also his uncle, Sam Gyaitai, a cripple who was known in the neighbourhood as a "wizard" or master painter.

His uncle often preached Buddhist scriptures to him, and taught him the history of Buddhism and the skills of painting. Even as a child, Khyi Kyag made frequent trips to the Tar and Labrang monasteries with his uncle to draw large frescos and tangkhas enshrined there.

At the mention of the basic skills of painting, Khyi Kyag's face lit up as if he had become intoxicated by a mellow, full-bodied liquor. Everything starts with the basics. He had started with a sharpened wood stick, drawing patterns of petals, drapery and clouds on an ash plate. Then he had to draw the naked bodies of Sakyamuni, Tsong-kha-ba, Manjusri, Sgrol-ma, and the Guardian God of Dharma, until he was good enough to paint their clothed images. Year in, year out, he worked from dawn till dusk, drawing and re-drawing on the same ash plate. In seven years' time he had drawn the five gods over a thousand times, and learned the book *Painting Scripture* by heart. His effort finally paid off, and he made a name for himself as a painter in the Rigoin area.

From Painter to Carpenter

In 1958, 18-year-old Khyi Kyag returned to secular life, entered a Tibetan middle school in his township, and taught at a primary school upon graduation for two years. During the "cultural revolution", Buddhism was banned as one of the "four old customs", and painting the Buddha, therefore, became illegal. To support his family, Khyi Kyag had to change his occupation and became a carpenter, wandering around villages, making furniture. Yet the temptation was so irresistible that he often found himself carving exquisite patterns and pictures on the furniture, doors and windows of his work.

After the "cultural revolution" ended, Buddhism came back in favour and local monasteries were crowded with worshippers once again. After a decade of carpentry, Khyi Kyag picked up his painting brushes and again was busy painting frescos and tangkhas for lamaseries of various villages. In 1979, when the Rigoin Art Gallery was founded, he became one of its first group of painters and researchers. Khyi Kyag still keeps the tangkhas painted by his uncle, who had passed away in 1965 at the age of 80, and a hada (white silk scarf) with the Dalai Lama's finger prints on it.

In 1987 Khyi Kyag, along with two other veteran painters, met with the CPC General Secretary, Hu Yaobang, during the party leader's visit to Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Hu spoke highly of the unique style of the Rigoin art, and urged them to pass their skills on to the younger generation.

Three of Khyi Kyag's four sons have become painters. His oldest son, Losang Dainba, became a lama and a pupil of Khyi Kyag's fellow apprentice Lama Kunzangin in Gasari Temple at 13. He has been painting for 17 years.

Previous page (large): A shimmering gold statue of Tsong-ka-ba, founder of the Dye-lugs-pa sect of Tibetan Buddhism.
Previous page (small): Coloured sculptures of the gods of Buddhism Tantrism.

1. **Khyi Kyag's three sons have picked up the master's skills.**
2. **Tiled sculpture of peculiar beasts on the front gate of the Wutun Village lower temple.**
3. **Delicate carvings adorn most doors and windows in Rigoin.**
4. **The architectural ornamentation of Rongwo Monastery is a combination of Tibetan and Han styles.**

Next page: Detail of a mural in the upper temple of Wutun Village

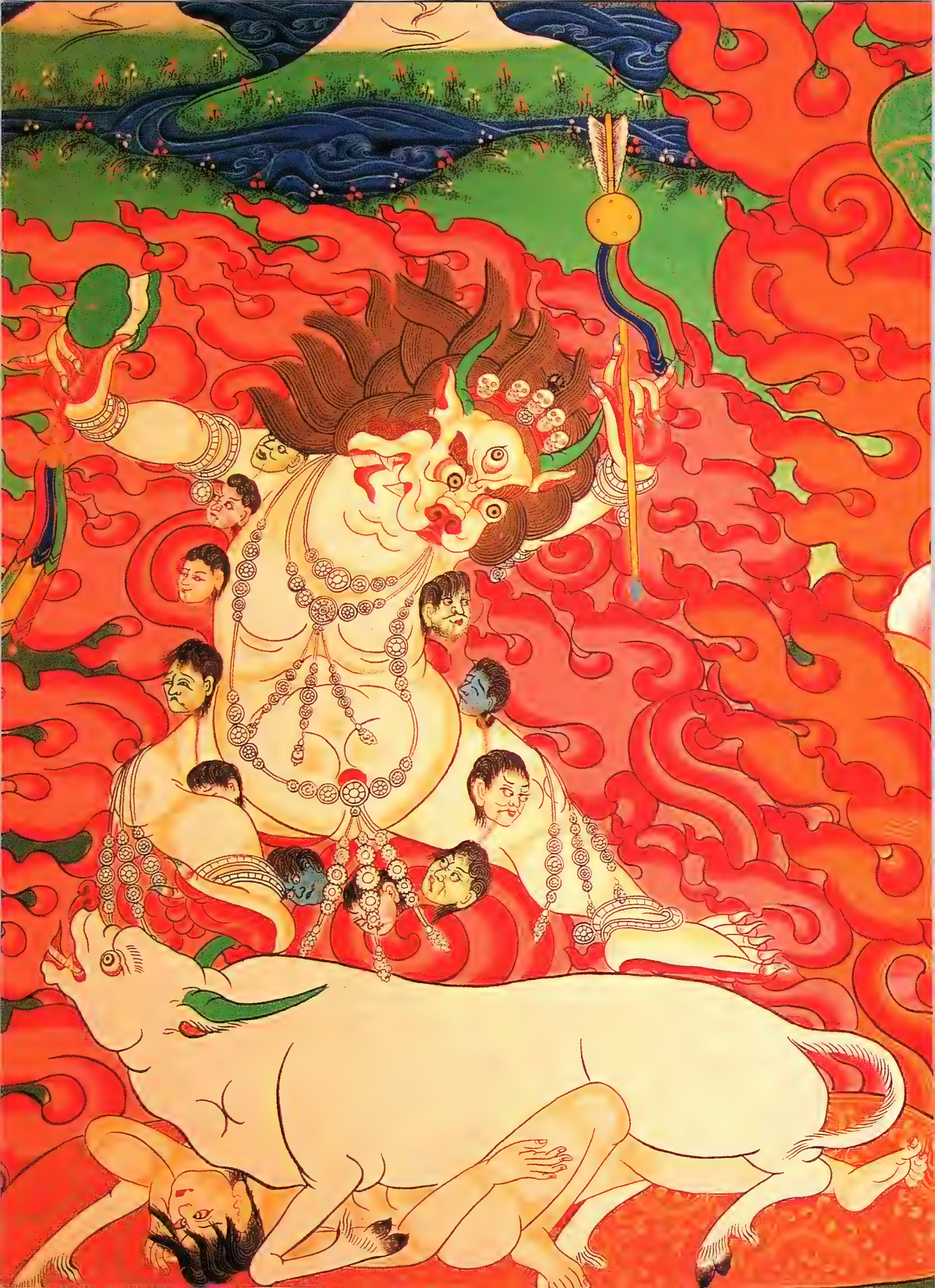
3

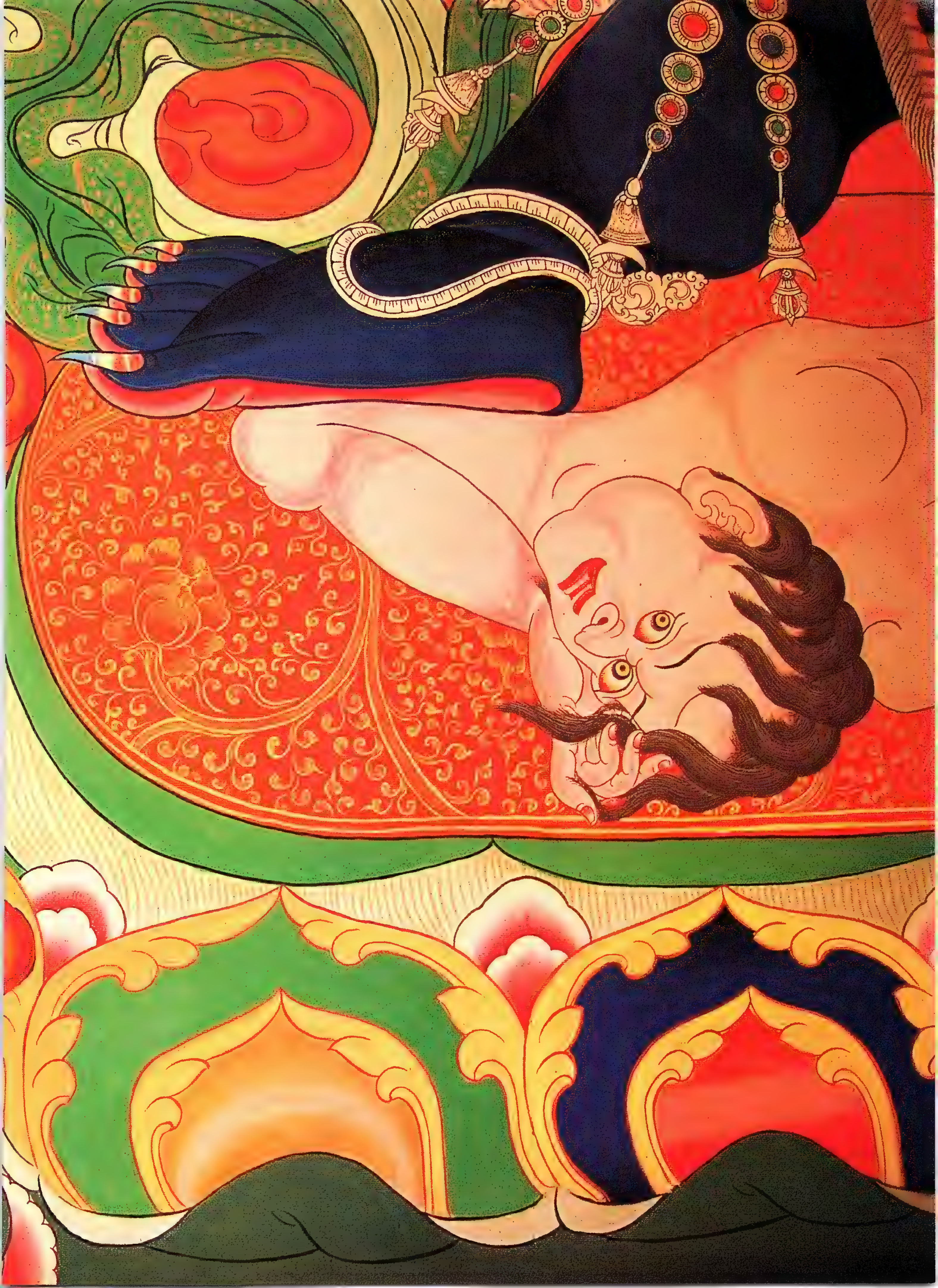
4

How did Rigoin Art Arise?

Not far from Rongwo Town, the seat of government of Tongren County and Huangnan Prefecture, five native villages stand off to the east: Wutun, Nyangdukhu, Garserap, Garmarap, and Thobkya. This area is called Rigoin in Tibetan. They are the cradle of traditional Tibetan Buddhist art. In these villages, almost everyone can paint or make statues, every family earns a living selling art, every courtyard presents a display of works of art, and every temple collects the best Buddhist art. The ornamental wood and brick carvings, colourful murals and tangkhas, and vividly portrayed statues of the Buddha and gods, are all so exquisite that you can't help lingering in appreciation.

How did Rigoin art earn its reputation? Since the beginning of the 15th century during the Yuan Dynasty, art with Buddhist motifs boomed around Rigoin. By the early19th century, the local art had become a school of its own, mingling techniques of Tibetan Buddhist art with elements of traditional Chinese painting.





SHAWU TSELANG: A MASTER ARTIST

When I set off from the county seat for Wutun Village, Khyi Kyag volunteered to go along, anxious to introduce me to another veteran painter, Shawu Tselang.

Wutun Village is divided by its two temples into upper and lower sections. Shawu Tselang, lived in a new house in the upper section, with a thick smell of paint filling his courtyard. The old painter was sitting on the porch drawing with a pencil. Although an octogenarian, he was hale and hearty and drew lines as smooth as iron, obviously still at the height of his career.

The old man could not speak Chinese, and Nyingka Gyal and Khyi Kyag took turns as interpreters. In the sitting-room my eye was caught immediately by a long, narrow photograph of several hundred people. As I read its headline "National Ceremony Conferring the Title of Master Artist", the old man used sign language to indicate his presence among those awarded the title.

A Pupil of Zhang Daqian

I sat in the master's own carved wooden chair and listened as he talked about his half-century career in painting.

Shawu Tselang turned out to be a Tibetan disciple of Zhang Daqian, a celebrated traditional Chinese painter. In the early 1940s, Zhang Daqian invited Shawu Tselang to copy frescos in Mogao Grottoes, Gansu Province, and was impressed by the young man's first assignment. At the prime of his life and with solid basic skills, Shawu could create vivid images of apsaras and dancing girls with smooth and precise lines. Occasionally, at the height of his enthusiasm, he went so far as to paint figures from toe to head, adding their eyes with a last touch. Encouraged by his Tibetan pupil's skill, Zhang Daqian gave young Shawu many valuable tips.

Shawu Tselang began his painting career at the age of seven, under his grandfather, and was already a painter in the Tar Monastery of Qinghai at the age of 15. Later he wandered around Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, Tibet, and even India, leaving numerous colourful images of Buddha, gods, demons, beasts, birds and flowers in hundred of temples. When I opened the exquisite picture album entitled *Rigoin Art*, I found that, apart from works bequeathed by ancestors, more than half of the masterpieces collected in the book were Shawu's.

A Legacy to Aspiring Painters

Before departing I visited Shawu Tselang's studio, and was shocked to see the floor littered with sketchings. A thousand pieces, in a simple straight-forward style, depicted paintings of different images of Buddha, Bodhisattvas, Sgrol-ma, heavenly kings, arhats, goddesses, and strange-looking gods and demons. Khyi Kyag told me that though the master was in good health, it was a tough job for a man of 80 to paint complete pictures. So the old man decided to commit all the Buddhist images embedded in his heart to paper, leaving behind his own legacy for aspiring painters.

The old man said that in his youth, paper was so dear he had to paint on an ash plate, and therefore had left few manuscripts. Novices, in his time, first drew the same images over and over again on their plates, until they attained perfection. Now since conditions had improved greatly, he was happy to benefit future generations with his memory of more than a thousand images.

1. **Shawu Tselang, bringing to life images long ago committed to memory.**
2. **Shawu Tselang and his family in their new house.**
3. ***Apsara*, one of a thousand drawings done by Shawu Tselang.**
4. **A mural depicting war in Tibetan Buddhism, now preserved in the upper temple of Wutun Village.**

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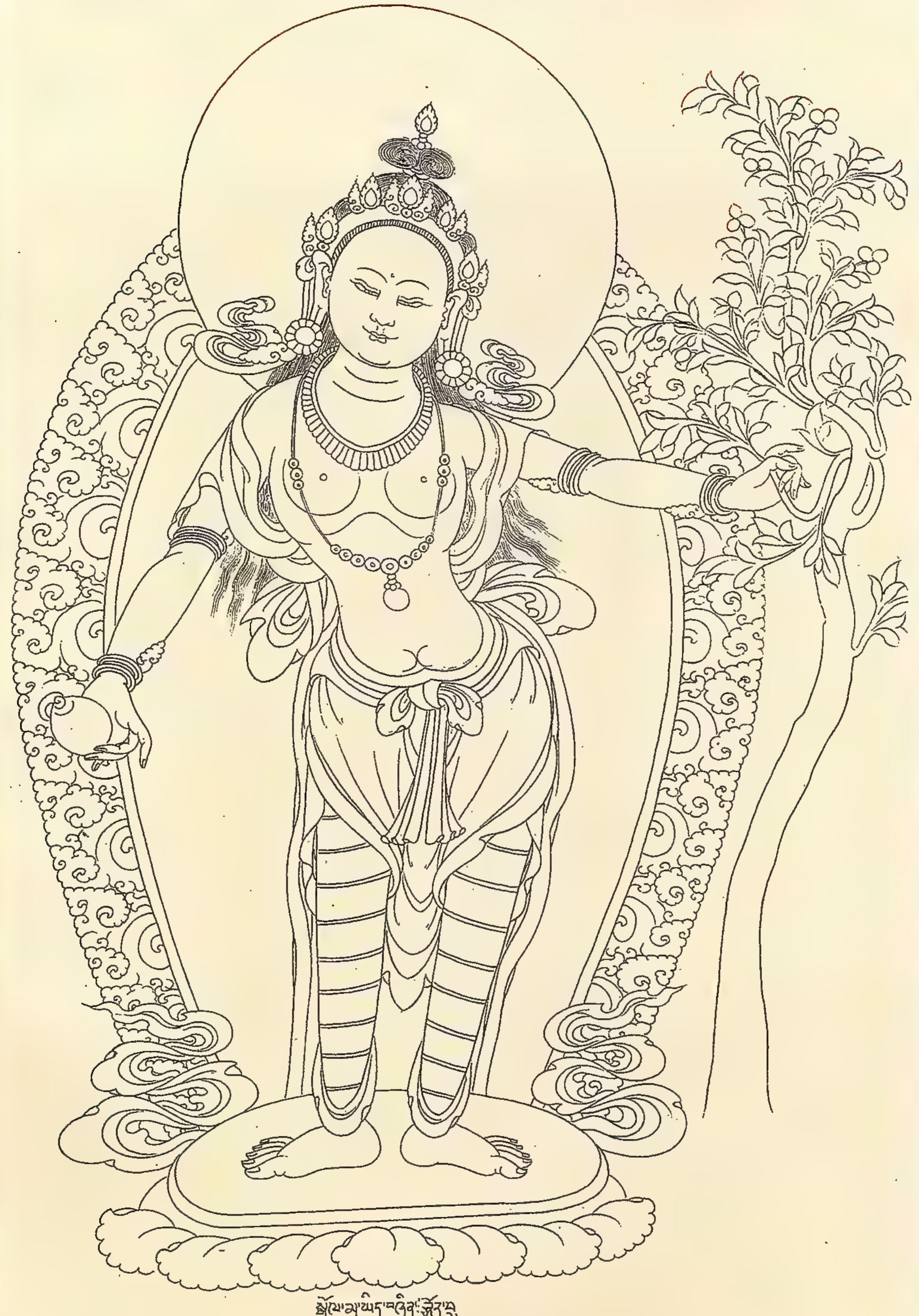


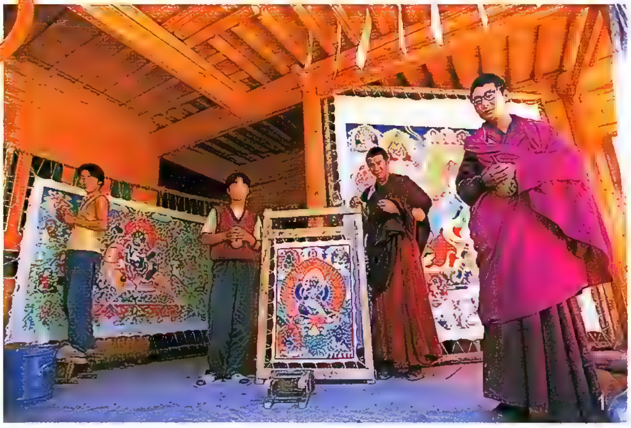
Honing Basic Skills on an Ash Plate

The teaching programme at Kagyu painting requires that each beginner must first learn how to draw the images of the five major gods — Sakyamuni, Tsepame, [illegible], Manjusri, and the Guardian God of Dharma. Usually a beginner works five to seven years before finishing his apprenticeship.

It is, however, hard to believe that it was on a plate of plant ashes the aspiring painters of Kagyu first practised their basic skills. A rectangular wood plate — called shingcha in Tibetan — is first coated with a thin layer of [illegible] and then sprinkled with the ashes from burned cypress leaves. This enables the artist to draw a picture on the plate with a sharpened wood stick. Drawings can be easily erased to start all over again as many times as required.

Today, most novices learn to paint on paper, but still some choose to follow the ancient masters' footsteps, learning initially on ash plates.

FOUR BROTHERS, FOUR PAINTERS

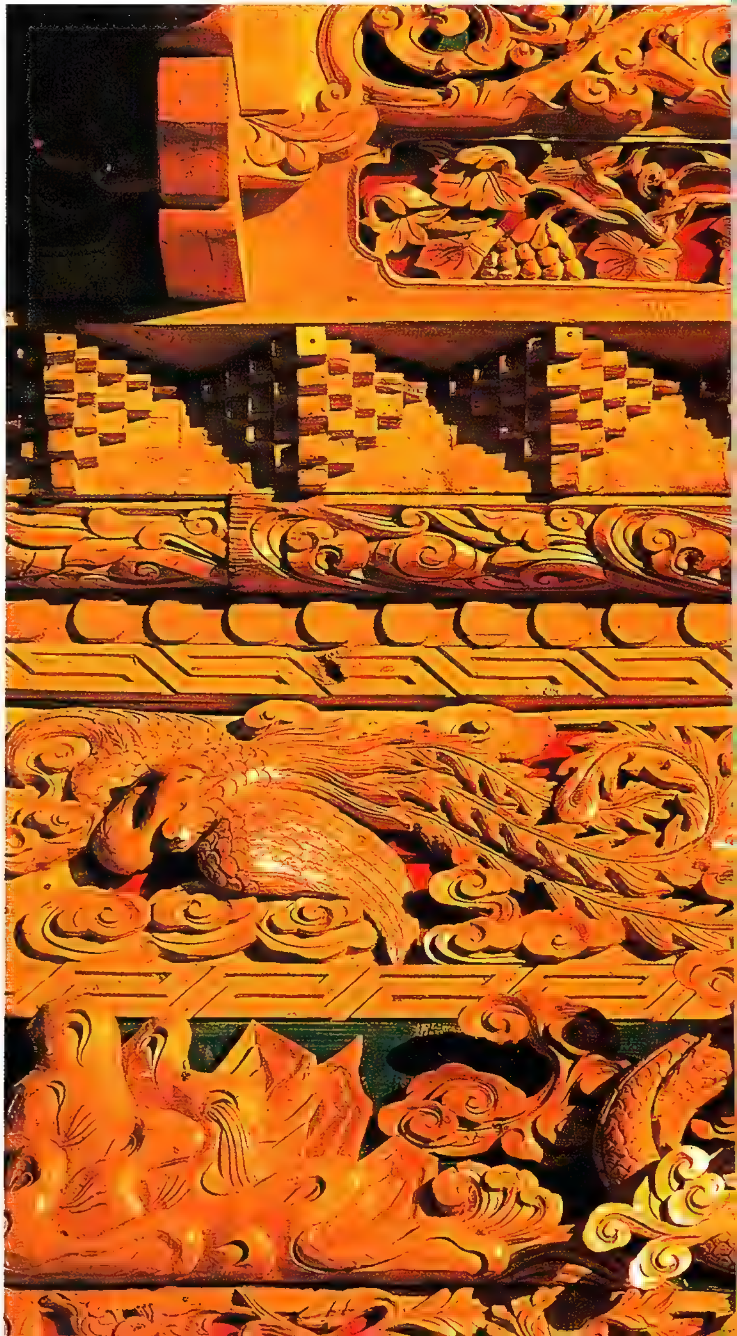


A 10-minute walk took us to the lower village temple gate where a young monk invited us into a little courtyard. On the porch three young men were painting in vivid colours on pieces of cloth mounted tightly on wooden frames, the biggest about two meters square, and the smallest 1.5 meters square. Entering the living-room, I saw two guitars on the wall, a cassette tape player and some cassette tapes scattered randomly on the bed. I picked up one, and was a little surprised to find out it was Wang Fei, a pop star from Hong Kong. The kitchen was messy; obviously the young men living here were not equipped with a woman's cleaning skills. But surprisingly, I learned that this young monk, Zhou Luo, was the senior lama of the lower temple, and the three young men were all his brothers — Chingkhu, aged 23, and also a monk, Kelzang, 21, and the youngest brother, Chanpa, 17. After their father's death, the four brothers and their mother became a tight-knit family in an effort to survive. Fully aware of his responsibility as the eldest son, Zhou Luo began to paint at the age of 18. As a late starter, he was assiduous and devoted. Furthermore, he had induced his three brothers to paint tangkhas, frescos, and to carve statues, thus providing a decent living for everyone.

After two years of hard work, the four brothers made enough money to build the courtyard as their studio, a spacious and tranquil site, which helps enhance their work efficiency.

I thought about Zhou Luo's mother, who, after many years of hard work and now living a leisurely life, must be proud of her sons.

1. Zhou Luo and his three brothers all earn a living through painting.
2. Ornamental brick carvings in the main hall of the Wutun Village upper temple.
3. Even this small village temple is finely decorated.
4. Close-up of the exquisitely carved exterior joinery of a monastery.
5. Vibrantly painted pillars in Rongwo Monastery.



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Artists' Ancestry Not Totally Tibetan

Did you know that some ancestors of Rigoin artists, though indistinguishable from local Tibetans, were originally not Tibetans at all?

During the Ming Dynasty, frontier soldiers from China's hinterland were stationed and settled in the area around Huangnan. According to Gazetteer of Xunhua County, "Most of the so-called Wutun Village natives used to live south of the Yangtse River, and a small minority came from Hezhou. Over time, the settlers integrated with the local Tibetans and other minority ethnic groups, and came to consider themselves as natives of Qinghai. So did the officials."

A SCHOOL MINGLING BUDDHISM WITH ART

In contrast with Zhou Luo, the senior lama of the upper temple was a small, older man. At first sight, he gave me an impression of extreme seriousness. As I was taking pictures of frescos in the front hall of the temple, with a crowd of curious and happy junior lamas standing by and cheering me on, he came out of the main hall, presumably disturbed by all these noises, with such a stern countenance that the junior lamas scurried off like frightened rats. Further contact with him proved that, underneath his cold exterior, he was not only a warm-hearted senior lama, but also a seasoned sculptor.

In two little courtyards, unfinished clay statues were laid out to dry among blooming flowers, and finished ones were glistening with a gold sheen. Some lamas were making a Buddha's head, hands, body, feet, and ornaments, while others were assembling statues, readying them for painting. The Buddha, Bodhisattvas and Tsong-kya-ba are all gilded, whereas the faces of guardian spirits, heavenly kings and Sgrol-ma are done in black, white, red, green, and blue respectively.

Junior lamas, about 10 years old, were kneading clay, preparing materials, learning sculpture under the guidance of older apprentices, or simply watching with folded arms. Before long their patience wore out, and they began chasing around, but settled down again when the senior monk appeared.

The most experienced artist was Dainzin Gyaco, a 30-year-old man whose round face is suggestive of Maitreya, the smiling Buddha. Having honed his skills under the senior lama for nine years, this knowledgeable and hard-working man is responsible for leading the younger apprentices in making statues as well as in routine studies of Buddhist sutras morning and night. The temple has actually become a school mingling Buddhism, with art with the senior lama as headmaster and master artist. After 10 years of study, an apprentice is allowed to work on his own, for then, he is already capable of making statues of Thathagata and Avalokitesvara up to 10 metres in height.

B BEARING THE BUDDHA IN HEART

As the day was wearing on, I returned to the art gallery for a cup of tea and there, Khyi Kyag suddenly remembered that he had forgotten to introduce me to one of their wood sculptors. Hastily he brought me to a fourth-floor room to meet Gaggoingya, a professional sculptor of the Rigoin Art Gallery.

Their room doubles as a studio and kitchen. A working desk stands by the window with a Buddha's head, a wood board, and carving knives on it. When asked if it was very tiring to make wood statues, he replied that, indeed, it was more complicated than making clay ones, and the leeway for revision was obviously more limited. One single inappropriate cut could lead to irremediable mistakes.

I couldn't help wondering how difficult it was, in the absence of sketches, to make sure each Buddha statue was formed precisely. The images, however, came to Gaggoingya so easily, for they had long been etched deep in his mind. In his 20-year career, he has carved several hundred Buddha statues out of tons of wood. Just by taking the wood in his hand, he can visualise his stored images of the Buddha, Avalokitesvara, heavenly kings, and Sgrol-ma.

He told me that he worships Buddha, and Buddha, in return, gives him energy and skills, inspiring him to make every cut accurate. Every time he finishes a statue with an air of benevolence, he feel one step closer to Buddha. Though living only in a tiny room, his inner world is grand, for he believes his afterlife would be a lucky and happy one.

1. **Apprenticeship completed, Gagdain Gyaco assembles his statue.**
2. **Gaggoingya, the art gallery's professional wood sculptor.**
3. **After nine years' study, Dainzin Gyaco has himself become a big brother in the monastery.**
4. **Gaggoingya's newest work, a statue of Vajradhara Buddha.**

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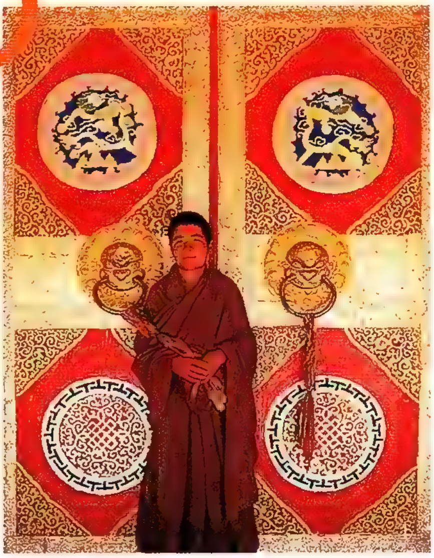
Sgrol-ma, Vajradhara Buddha, Tsong-kha-ba

The images of the Buddha and gods in Tibetan Buddhism are similar to those in Han Buddhism, but some of them have acquired appearances rarely seen in temples of the Han-inhabited Central Plains.

Sgrol-ma, for example, is virtually unknown in Han Buddhism. One of the female Buddhist gods in Tibetan Lamaism, Sgrol-ma is said to be the transformed body of Avalokitesvara, who saves the multitudes from bitterness and delivers them from hell. She has 21 appearances altogether.

Vajradhara, according to Lamaism, is a Bodhisattva in charge of discipline. His image varies with different sects, sometimes single, sometime in the arms of a female consort.

Tsong-kha-ha (1357-1419) is the founder of the Gelug (Yellow Hats) Sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Born in Huangzhong County of Qinghai Province, he was tonsured as a monastic novice when he was seven, and left for Tibet at the age of 16. Having become well read in Tantrism at the age of 38, he reformed the religion, ridding it of slack discipline and corruption, and founded the Yellow Hats sect.



Nyingka Gyal advised that my visit to the hometown of the Rigoin art would not be complete without seeing the Rongwo Monastery, for its walls, beams and pillars were all graciously filled with fine examples of Rigoin art.

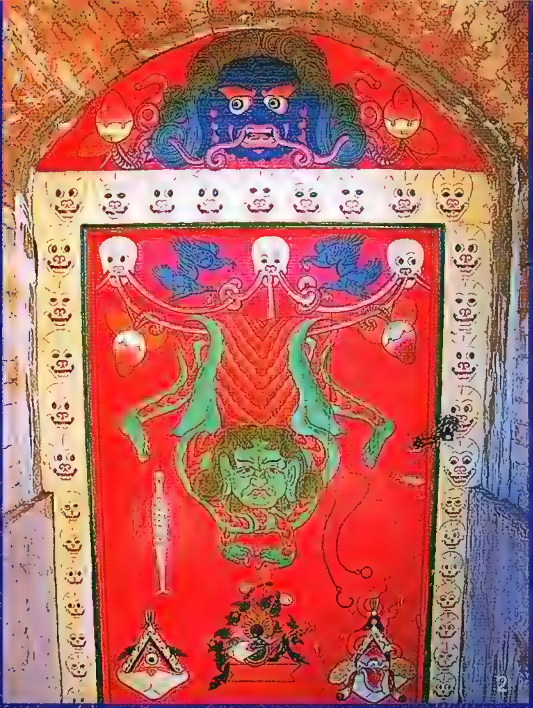
Though it was only August, the breeze in the early morning was so chilly it reminded me of later autumn. And yet, the sun's luminous rays enveloped the gate, the walls and the white pagoda of the Rongwo Monastery in a translucent coat of orange.

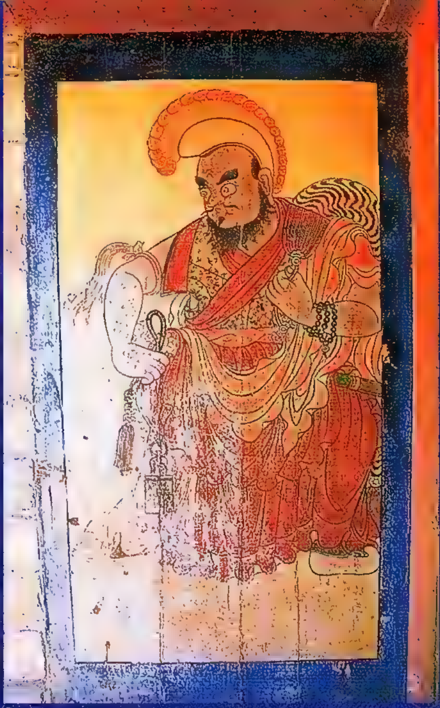
Wandering around the halls — there were a hundred of them — I found the door lintels, roof beams, crossbeams, cloisters and capitals were carved with ornamental flowers and animals, and the walls were inlaid with patterns of "Eight Treasures" in brick and masonry. The halls featured statues of Sakyamuni, Avalokitesvara, Manjusri, and other Bodhisattvas with kind faces all beaming in a golden sheen, and guardian warriors, heavenly kings, looking hideously fierce. Most of the frescos and tangkhas depict the life of Buddha; many of the cultural treasures date back two to three hundred years.

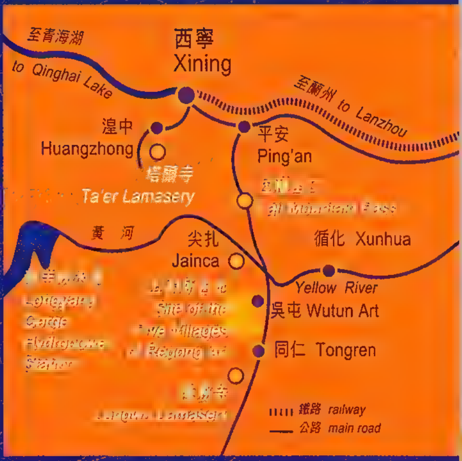
The dim light in the halls didn't prevent my appreciation of the exuberant imagination and the discrete labour of the chisels in these great works of art. The 11-metre-tall statue of Tsong-kha-ba, whose body is gilded as well as inlaid with gold and precious stones, is especially valued. All are the best of the Rigoin art, chosen from the creations of great masters.

Indeed, any style of art infused with religious zeal would achieve peculiar vitality, eminent existence and unique expression. Rigoin art is a perfect example.

1. The gate of the Gasari Temple's side hall.
2. Designs like these on the gate are to scare evil spirits away.
3. A painting of a monk with Indian characteristics.
4. Rongwo Monastery is not only a famous Tibetan Buddhist sanctuary in Qinghai Province, but also a museum of Rigoin art works accumulated over generations.






至青海湖
to Qinghai Lake
西寧
Xining
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湟中
Huangzhong
平安
Ping'an
塔爾寺
Ta'er Lamasery
黃 河
尖扎
Jainca
循化 Xunhua
Yellow River
吳屯 Wutun Art
同仁 Tongren
鐵路 railway
公路 main road

Tips for a Rigoin Art Tour

◆ Transportation:

A regular bus sets off daily at 7:00 a.m. from the long-distance bus station in Xining for the 188 kilometre ride to Tongren, arriving in the afternoon.

◆ Board and Lodging:

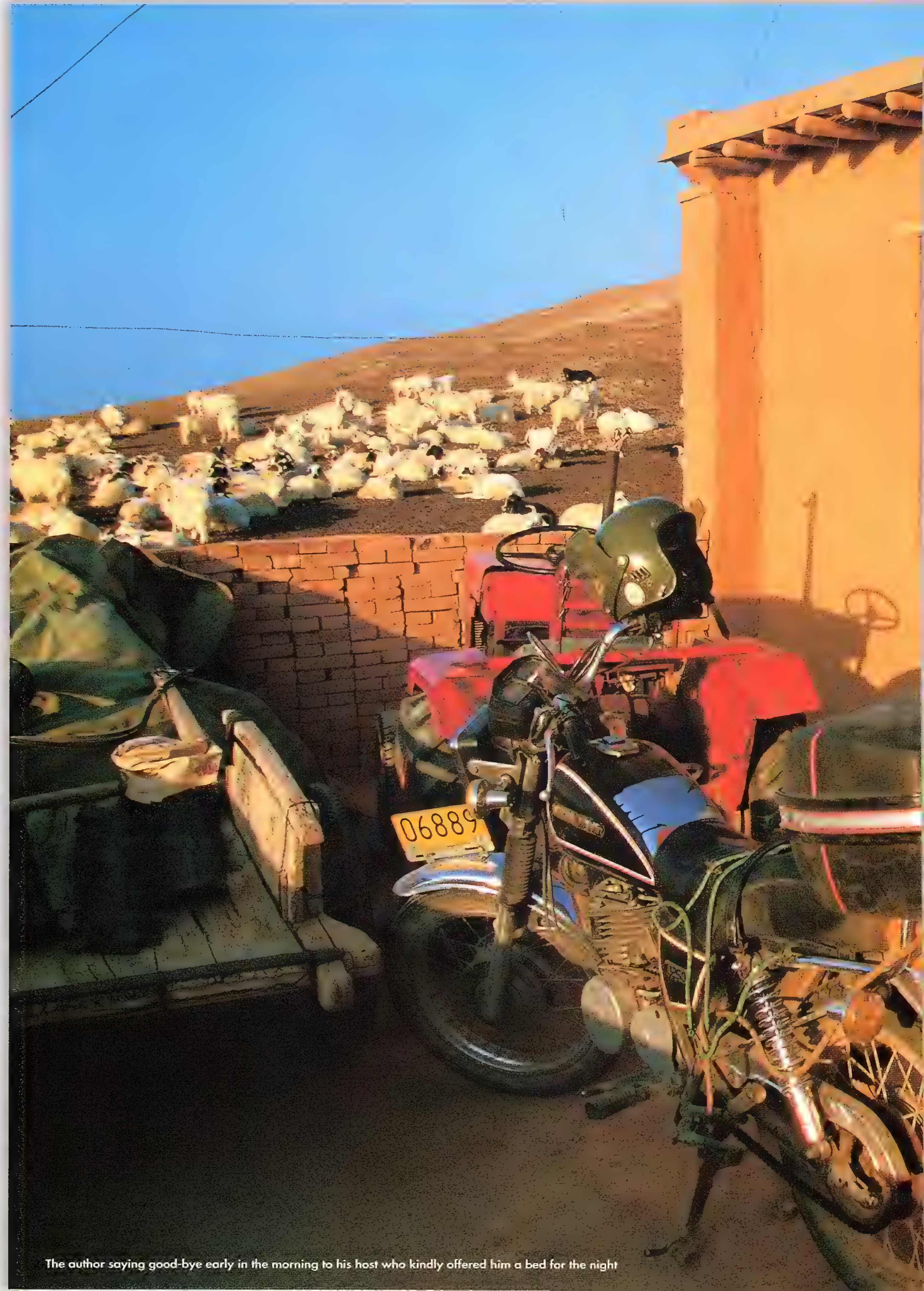
The Huangnan Hotel at Rongwo Town has standard rooms costing about 80 yuan per night; and luxury rooms for about 120 yuan.

Restaurants serve mainly local style foods, such as stewed mutton, sesame seed cakes, and noodles, but Sichuan style is also available.

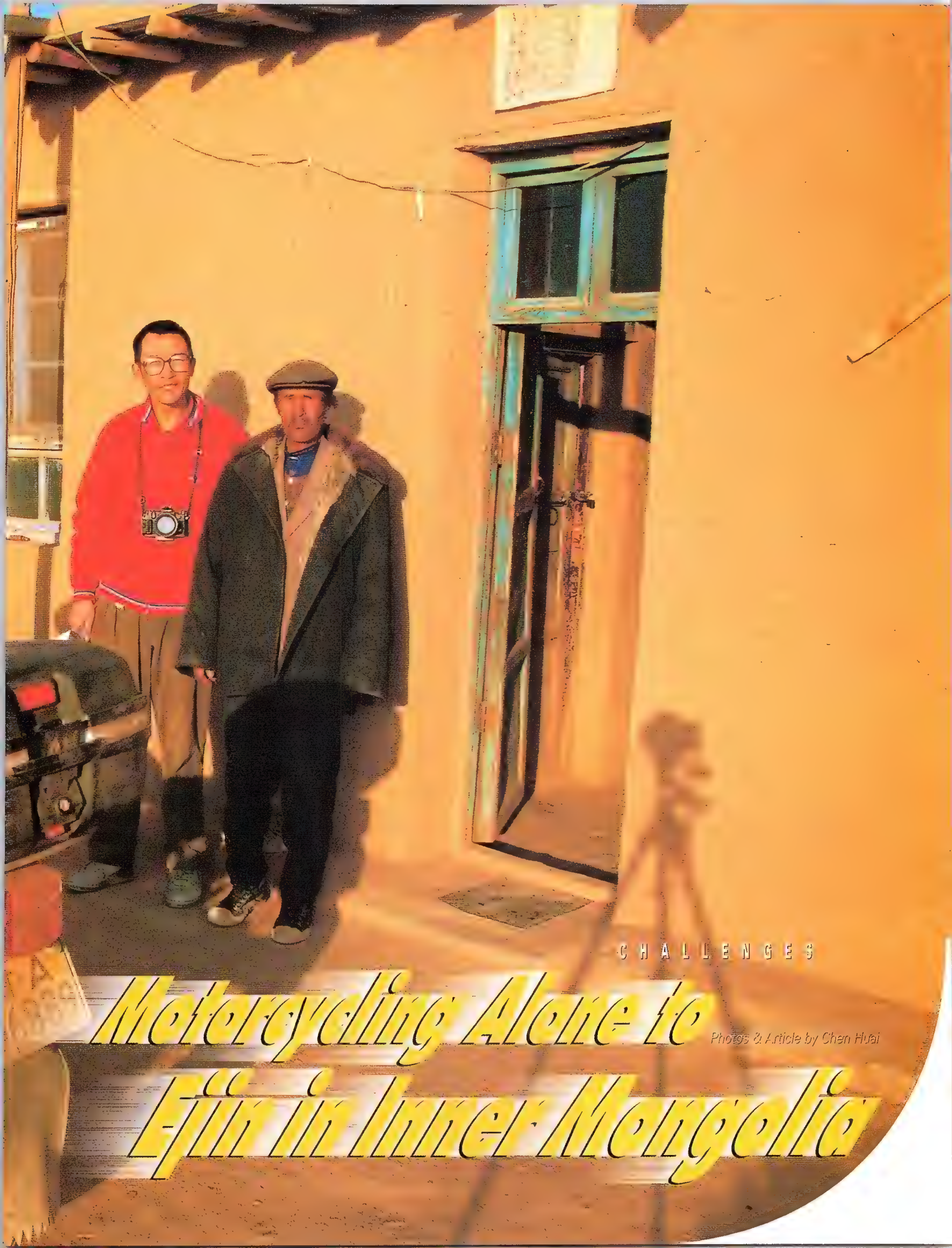
◆ Getting Around:

Transportation between Rongwo Town and Wutun Village is fairly convenient, by bus or tricycle. Chartering a car is not expensive.

The Rigoin Art Gallery and the Rongwo Monastery are both in Rongwo Town. Some works of art are for sale, and you can bargain.



The author saying good-bye early in the morning to his host who kindly offered him a bed for the night



CHALLENGES

Motorcycling Alone to Ejin in Inner Mongolia

Photos & Article by Chen Huai

Every autumn, when the leaves of the poplars turn to gold in Ejin Banner (County) in western Inner Mongolia, the beauty of the scenery evokes lasting emotions. A long-standing desire to see its autumn glory provoked me into action last year and I set off on my motorcycle which, I believed, would be both convenient and thrilling.

Crossing Rivers and Deserts

I set out from Lanzhou at noon on October 3 and planned to reach Jingyuan County, 165 kilometres away, on the first day. As I sped along, I pictured the geography of the route I intended to follow. On the way to Inner Mongolia, I had to cross the Yellow River three times, at Lanzhou, Jingyuan and Zhongwei. Then I would traverse three deserts, the Ulan Buh, Tengger and Badain Jaran on my way from Bayanhot to Ejin. This alone filled me with excitement and uncertainty about what lay ahead.

The Baotou-Lanzhou Railway crosses the Tengger Desert near Zhongwei. As the Yellow River, Baotou-Lanzhou Railway and Tengger Desert converge at Shapotou in Zhongwei County, the area has become the perfect place to view colourful man-made and natural scenes. Local officials had lost no time in setting up tourist facilities on the banks of the Yellow River. A hostel with a giant courtyard provided shelter for the night; later I found that I was their solitary guest. I had made a shortcut during the day by driving more than 80 kilometres along a tortuous mountain road, so exhaustion overtook me quickly that night. I turned in early, with dreams of tomorrow's journey.

Dramatic Sunsets in the Desert

Leaving Shapotou behind, I sped along a provincial highway towards Yinchuan, 70 kilometres away. A road sign on my left told me I could take the route carved along the mountainside to the Yinchuan-Bayanhot Highway and avoid driving through Yinchuan. This proved good advice, as on that route I then had the pleasure of seeing the Western Xia-dynasty mausoleums. They are a group of circular earthen mounds standing resolutely on a wide-open expanse, stretching more than 10 kilometres from south to north. Their simple yet distinguished forms deeply impressed me – emperors, their empresses and concubines lay buried here. What a pleasure to encounter such an historic link to the culture and aesthetic taste of an ethnic minority.

Close to sunset, I found myself on the Yinchuan-Bayanhot Highway at a spot not 80 kilometres from Bayanhot. The highway first goes west over the Helan Mountains through a pass and then north through the foothills of the mountains. Road conditions were better than I had imagined and compared well with the highways in western Gansu. As soon as I had driven through the mountain pass, the vast Inner Mongolian desert unfolded before my very eyes. In the clear sky, the crimson sun was already pressing into the horizon, presenting me with a truly dramatic sunset picture. From that day forward, I saw these glorious and colourful sunsets almost daily.

The Helan Mountains: Disappointment

The Helan Mountains are rather small compared with the Qilian and Qinling mountains. I think most Chinese people have heard of Helan from a line in the poem composed by the famous Song-dynasty General Yue Fei who led his army to fight the invaders fearlessly, which reads, "Leading a long train of chariots, I'll crush my way through the Helan Mountains."

As I sped on, I was rather disappointed to find that the Helan Mountains did not have the grandeur of a great mountain range. By the time I had arrived at Bayanhot, in Alxa Banner, my disappointment reached its lowest depths. I realised that "Helan" simply means "a natural barrier", which is the same as "Alxa" in Mongolian.

In the morning, I went to the Border Defence Bureau in Bayanhot League (Prefecture) to obtain a pass to the frontier, then made a tour around the Prince's

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Mansion (now a museum) and the Prolonging-Bliss Temple (the former family shrine of the prince). I left Bayanhot at noon and headed for the North Temple.

The scenery through the mountain valley was quite beautiful – imposing rocks, autumn woods dyed with a golden hue and goats climbing up cliffs. The North Temple in the desolate desert was not the bustling place I had heard. The Great Scripture Hall fronted by four columns was locked up, and I could not find a single lama or monk in the whole place. An old man there told me that only during religious activities would they (including himself) don their cassocks. Otherwise, they wear ordinary clothes to go about their work.

A Motorcycle Alone Amongst the Trucks

I left the North Temple and drove on an asphalt highway for about 10 kilometres at the foot of the Helan Mountains. Knowing the next 600 kilometres of my journey would be across the Badin Jaran Desert, I was reluctant to leave this smooth highway and slowed down to enjoy my last few minutes on it. As I did so, the welcome morning breeze carried a noisy swarm of locusts past me.

I turned onto an unpaved road extended north with the dark Helan Mountains on its right. Embarking on this road, my speed slowed almost immediately and the air was filled with dust. There were trucks loaded with coal, and dust-covered jeeps crawling unsteadily on this road, which was actually a dried-up river bed. I was the only motorcycle among them.

As the day warmed, I reached a place called Qagan Sands. This I remember well, not because its name was on the map, but because of the road maintenance station there. A small restaurant in the station courtyard served passing drivers, mainly from coal trucks. Surprised and curious at the sight of a motorcycle, the few drivers eating there inquired where I was from and where I was going. When I said to see autumn in Ejin Banner they were shocked. One of the drivers even advised me to turn back now. "The road ahead will get even more difficult...."

A Herdsman's Hospitality

The desert autumn sun blazed overhead, its rays bouncing off the white sandy surface of the road. At noon it was particularly dazzling. The deeper I rode into the desert, the hotter it became. According to my plan, I was to reach Suhaitu that evening. But with the sun again beginning its startling descent, I was still 20 kilometres from it. The sandy road was very arduous, allowing me to only creep along. Worrying about the approaching darkness, I headed straight for a house I saw.

It was the house of a Mongolian herdsman in his 50s. He invited me in and told me apologetically that he was alone at home with nothing to offer me. Luckily, I had my lunch left-overs with me. Late that night, the man asked me to sleep on his son's bed, muttering on and on to himself, wondering why his son, who had gone out to have his motorcycle repaired, had not yet come back.

A Broken Luggage Carrier

This section of the desert road was fairly decent; it was the section that crossed the sand dunes that gave me the greatest headache. Though I slowed down and drove very carefully, the motorcycle still jostled along uncomfortably. This continued for several days as I drove gingerly forward, covering only 100, 150 and 180 kilometres respectively during the first three days. One section of about 20 to 30 kilometres was particularly jarring, on which I could neither go too slow, nor too fast. In the afternoon, 20 kilometres from the day's destination, I stopped to fuel up and discovered that the luggage carrier had broken off. But only in Ejin could I get the luggage carrier fixed.

1. **Women of Shapotou collecting *facai,* a kind of black vegetable with market demand**
2. **Autumn in the Helan Mountains**
3. **Shapotou**
4. **The North Temple in the desolate desert**
5. **Herdsmen's houses at the southern foot of the Helan Mountains**
6. **Carvings are found on the cliffs near North Temple**

An Isolated Life

The same day, after travelling nearly 100 kilometres, I saw a herdsman's house – the only house – at the foot of some small hills. I introduced myself to Qimug, the hostess of the house, and her son Boled, who looked about 20 years old. Her husband had gone 20 kilometres down the road to help with the construction of another family's house. Her 18-year-old youngest son was herding sheep in the hills 10 kilometres away. The family also kept Bactrian camels, though only about 50 because grass was so sparse here. I took my luggage and the box from the broken luggage carrier, put them in the house and then sat down on the ground outside the courtyard to drink tea and chat with Qimug, who was skilfully whittling pieces of tamarisk wood used for piercing the noses of camels.

Most herdsmen now prefer riding motorcycles to camels when tending their animals or going out on errands. Qimug's family is no different and owns two motorcycles and a small four-wheel tractor. On my way, I saw quite a few local motorcyclists who raced through masses of sand on the road, overtaking me easily, and still in control of their bikes. I had tried their technique this morning after a local woman had whizzed past me, but soon found myself lying in the sand.

Fifty Camels, 300 Buckets of Water

In the barren Gobi desert, not only is grass sparse, even the well water is alkaline and bitter. A 20 kilometre trek is needed to get fresh water. But camels can drink the well water and so, do not need to be fed salt. I had a chance to see the camels in action when Boled took me over to the well on his motorcycle the following day. When there was plentiful grass, the camels came to the well for water every 10 to 15 days, but in poor conditions, they came every one or two days. As soon as we arrived, the camels all rushed over and gathered around the well. Boled lifted the wooden cover of the well, drew water with a rubber bucket and emptied it into a wooden trough. As I took photographs, I was squeezed between the animals jostling for a drink. A camel that stepped on my foot was alarmed and retreated clumsily when I quickly pulled my foot away; however, I was even more surprised that it did not hurt me at all because camel's feet are very soft.

It was more than an hour before the camels drank their fill. They would drink, then relax a while, chewing and waiting, before continuing again. Qimug told me that camels drink astonishing amounts and would not leave the well until satisfied completely. An adult camel could drink about seven buckets of water. So I calculated that if each of the 50 camels had an average of six buckets, Boled would had to draw up at least 300 buckets of water. This was indeed tremendous physical exertion for him considering he suffered from muscle paralysis, a consequence of a childhood illness.

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At about four o'clock in the afternoon, I heard the distant sounds of a motor. As I stood up and beckoned the driver in off the road, I saw it was a jeep fitted with a freight box. I arranged to pay him 350 yuan for him to take me and my motorcycle to Ejin. When it was time to say goodbye to Qimug and Boled, I felt sad even though I had only stayed with them 24 hours. Qimug returned to the house, brought out a bag of dried cheese and said to me, "This is for the road...."

200,000 Poplars Die Every Year

We drove all evening heading straight for Ejin. On the eastern side of Ejin, I could saw a huge forest of poplars, shadowy trees gently swaying in the moonlight. In the headlights they danced with golden light. Like most of the other people on the jeep, who were from Bayanhot, I was mesmerised by this delightful sight.

It was already past 11:00 p.m. when we arrived at Laihubu, the seat of the Ejin government, so I had to wait till the following morning to repair my motorcycle. As I rode out of town to admire the beauty of the poplar forest I recalled hearing that the poplar forest in Ejin Banner and the one along the banks of the Peacock River at Lop Nur, now partially withered, are the only two large forests of diversiform-leaved poplars in the world. Deep in the forest there were many impressive views – solitary trees and clusters of four or five trees, each with unique charm. The ground was golden with fallen leaves. Careful not to disturb anything, I walked round and round, envying the flock of goats grazing on the discarded leaves. What a superb environment to have all to themselves!

No two trees were the same, though leaves were fluttering down from all of them. Some stood tall and straight, soaring into the sky while others permanently bent from the wind, telling a different story. As the trees swayed in the wind, I imagined dancing ladies spreading wide, long sleeves or crazy painters wildly wielding their brushes. Such beauty, I believed, could rarely be found anywhere in the world.

The poplar forest was sustained by the Black River, originating in the Qilian Mountains and was called the Weak River in ancient times. In recent years, as environmental conditions have worsened, the Black River had stopped flowing and the poplars were dying at a rate of 200,000 trees every year. The government is now involved in a study of the situation.

A Hidden Home in the Poplar Forest

While photographing the poplar forest, I found a herdsman's house hidden in a small depression amidst sand dunes and surrounded by many poplars on the other side of the river-bed.

The herdsman readily agreed to let me photograph his home and the surroundings the following morning. Up at 6:00 a.m. the next day, I brought gifts with me to express my gratitude. From sunrise on, I spent the whole morning taking photographs to my heart's content. Later I went to my host's house for tea. He kindly invited me to try some barley doughnuts fried in mutton fat. The conversation clouded when I inquired about his goats and camels. He said that since the weather was becoming drier and drier each year the grass stopped growing and so, his family's hundred goats and a dozen camels had to survive on poplar leaves throughout autumn and winter.

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1. **Life in the desert west of the Helan Mountains**
2. **Having supper at a herdsman's house**
3. **Passing through the frontier check point**
4. **Rushing to the well**

The Setting Sun Brings Icy Feet

For my return journey, I decided to travel along the Western River Corridor in Gansu, by Jinta County and Zhangye City and then out of Biandukou to reach Qinghai's Menyuan. From there, I would travel down the Datong River valley to Tianzhu and return to Lanzhou.

The distance from Ejin to Jinta was over 300 kilometres with over more than two-thirds directly through the desert. When I found there was no petrol stations along the way, I concluded the best way to get to Jinta was to ask someone to transport the motorcycle for me, while I hitched a ride. A truck from the Grain Bureau of Jinta County was parked in the hotel yard, and they agreed to take my motorcycle to Jinta.

In the afternoon, I went with a few photographer friends from Lanzhou to Badain Jaran Desert to take photographs. Each carrying our photography gear, we climbed the sand dunes barefooted. A boundless sea of sand suddenly captivated us all. In the middle of this incredible sight was the bed of the Black River, where a long line of poplars had grown, presenting a completely different desert view. The desert was dyed crimson by the setting sun and a crescent moon soon climbed atop of dunes. Enthusiastically, we aimed our cameras at the masterpieces created by nature.

It was an arduous walk back through the shifting sands. In the darkness,

the sand on the shaded side of the dunes felt icy cold to our bare feet. If one walks barefoot in the early morning, the sand may cause frostbite!

We had our supper in Ejin around 9:00 p.m. and travelled overnight to Jinta.

Passing Biandukou: Numb with Cold

The Datong River valley on the southern side of the Qilan Mountains was a place I had long desired to see, and now in late autumn, I believed the view should be well worth the journey.

Having retrieved my motorcycle and loaded my things back on it, I drove in the direction of Jiuquan along a broad, smooth asphalt highway. Along the way, I passed through Jiuquan, Qingshui, Gaotai and Linze and finally stayed the night in a hotel in Zhangye.

Biandukou Pass is famous because of Sui-dynasty Emperor Yangdi who travelled through Biandu Pass from Qinghai to Zhangye. No one expected snow in June there and, as a result, a great many of his men were frozen to death. As I proceeded southward from Zhangye – and it became increasingly colder – I fully understood their plight. By the time I had reached Minle County, I needed my overcoat. The temperature plunged further when I began my ascent up Biandukou Pass. It began to snow at the summit and though the snow was not heavy, the wind was piercingly cold. Hands and feet were numbed with cold. After the strenuous and shivering climb up the mountain, I descended into a place called Ebo, where some local Muslims had opened small restaurants. Badly in need of a hot meal, I stopped at one with a blazing stove inside and ordered a bowl of hot soup first. Warmed up and with a full stomach I left Ebo and sped along on excellent roads to arrive in Menyuan in Qinghai Province just after 4:00 p.m.

Knowing there would be a full moon that night, I took only a short rest in the hotel before gathering up my cameras and driving to the edge of town. Bundles of wheat lay neatly row by row in the newly harvested fields. Villages at the foothills of the mountains were bathed in the last rays of the setting sun. Smoke from kitchen chimneys was coiling up like writhing snakes from every house. Dusk in a mountain village is always so soothing and nostalgic.... Before it was totally dark in the west, the moon, a large, round disk of pale gold, rose and cast its light on the snow-capped mountains. The fields were so hushed and serene that I was reluctant to leave.

Staring at the gleaming moon, I thought to myself that I did not suffer my cold day's journey for nothing.

A Blown Tyre

From Menyuan, I continued eastward along a road on mixed sand and earth. Though the surface was bumpy, it was still much better than the Inner Mongolian roads, where, with heaps of sand blown across them, skidding was a continuous event.

The river valley in autumn was cool and colourful, the river clear and placid. Through the gaps in the mountain I could see snow on the taller peaks behind. There were many suspension bridges spanning the Datong River, presenting an intriguing sight.

As I pushed along the winding road in the river valley, I came upon a quaint scene – a small village nestled at the foot of a snow-capped

1. The enchanting autumn scene of Ejin
2. A lamasery (by Shi Baoxiu)

mountain where some villagers were threshing wheat. The whole village was set amidst golden autumn foliage. I drove over, parked the motorcycle and began my photo session. When I finished, I found my rear tyre blown and thought myself lucky that it had happened here in the village and not out on the deserted road. By the time I had patched up the inner tube with my supplies and one of the villagers helped me pump up the tyre, it was already past 2:00 p.m.

"Skeleton" Rocks

By 5:00 p.m., I reached a place called Zhalongkou, where I crossed over to the other side of the river. On the north side of the river was Tiantang Township of the Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County in Gansu Province, where there was a tract of jagged red rocks in a great variety of unusual shapes, some resembling skeletons. To get good photographs of these odd rocks, I stayed overnight in a local house nearby, along with some travelling peddlers from Gansu's Tai'an County.

In the cold morning, before breakfast, I took my fill of photographs of these delightful rocks and then set off again.

Poetic Travel Memories

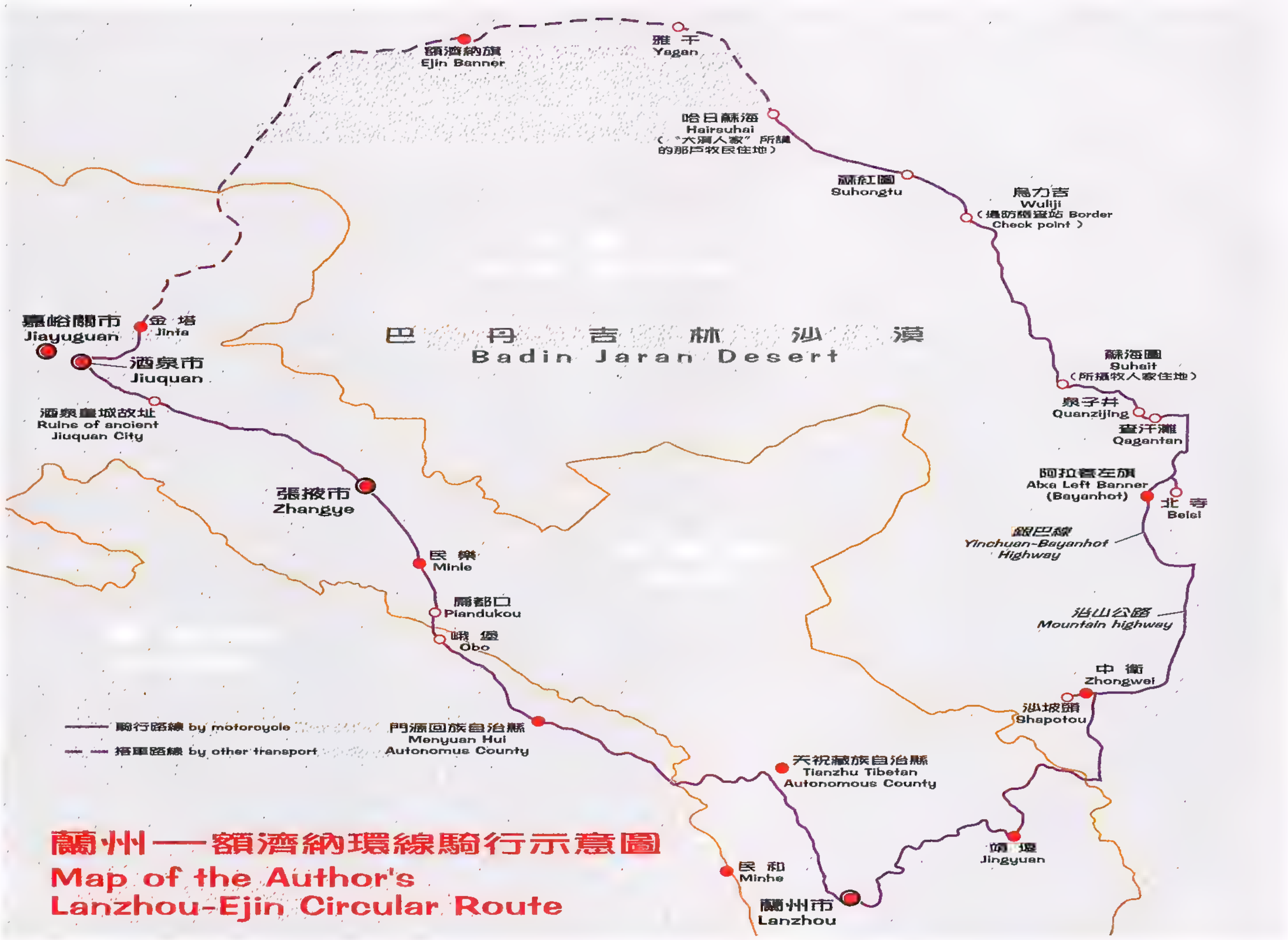
The distance from the mountain village to Tanshan (Charcoal) Mountain was over 20 kilometres of winding road on the mountain's edge – an exhilarating experience. The vivid scenes of the trees of the mountain side in late autumn reminded me of an ancient poet Zheng Banqiao, who wrote: "The trees shed their excesses in late autumn." Travellers of all descriptions filled that twisting road, adding life to the mountains and forests.

In the fortnight on my way, I had watched sunrises and sunsets, and a full moon rise. I returned to Lauzhou on October 17 at 7:00p.m., completing a journey of 2,068 kilometres on the motorcycle.

When I was 20 metres from home, a loud thump indicated that one of the rear shock absorbers had dropped off, which sounded like fireworks celebrating my return.

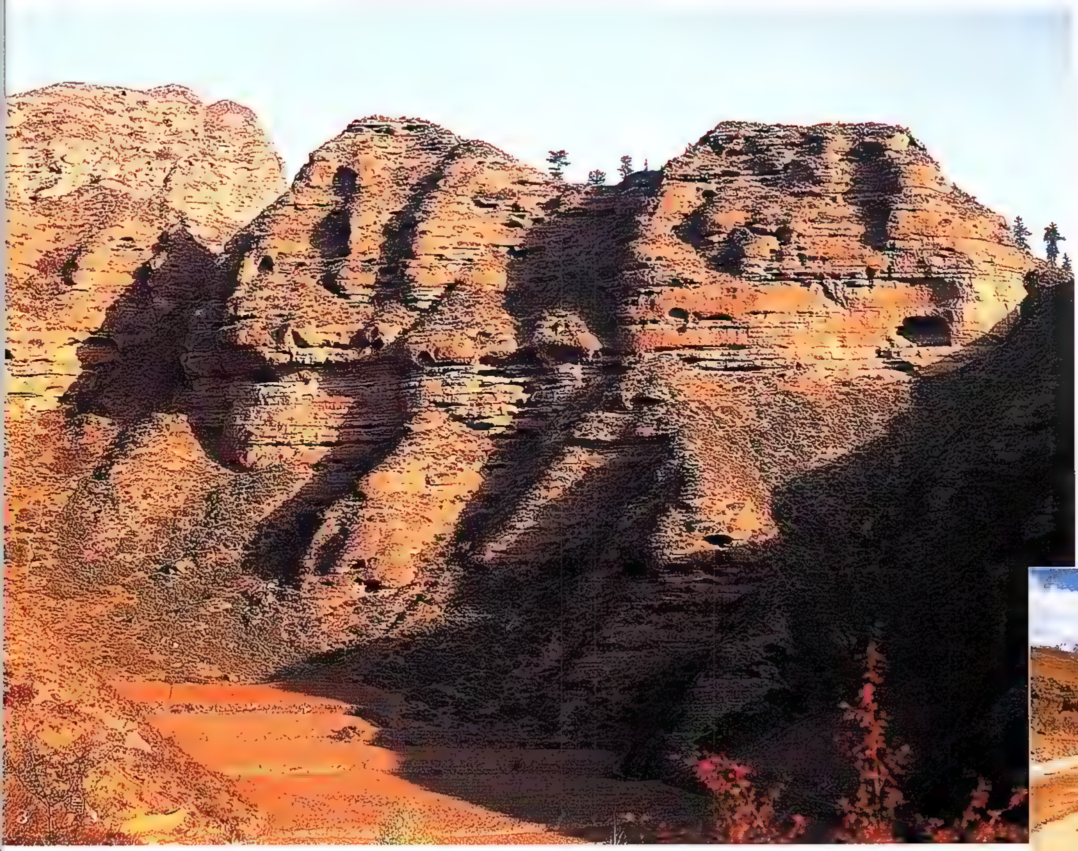
Translated by Tang Bowen

1. Ejin is famed as the "home of camels". (by Shi Baoxiu)
2. A Mongolian family in Ejin (by Shi Baoxiu)
3. Red-sand hills in Tiantang Township
4. The author on his way crossing the Qilian Mountains


額濟納旗
Ejin Banner
雅 干
Yagan
哈日蘇海
Hairsuhai
（"大漠人家"所講的那戶牧民住地）
蘇紅圖
Suhongtu
烏力吉
Wuliji
（邊防檢查站 Border Check point）
巴丹吉林沙漠
Badin Jaran Desert
嘉峪關市
Jiayuguan
金 塔
Jinta
酒泉市
Jiuquan
酒泉皇城故址
Ruine of ancient Jiuquan City
張掖市
Zhangye
民 樂
Minle
扁都口
Piandukou
峨 堡
Obo
騎行路線 by motorcycle
搭車路線 by other transport
門源回族自治縣
Menyuan Hui Autonomus County
天祝藏族自治縣
Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County
民 和
Minhe
蘭州市
Lanzhou
靖 遠
Jingyuan
蘇海圖
Suhait
（所攝牧人家住地）
泉子井
Quanzijing
查汗灘
Qagantan
阿拉善左旗
Alxa Left Banner (Bayanhot)
北 寺
Beisi
銀巴線
Yinchuan-Bayanhot Highway
沿山公路
Mountain highway
中 衛
Zhongwei
沙坡頭
Shapotou

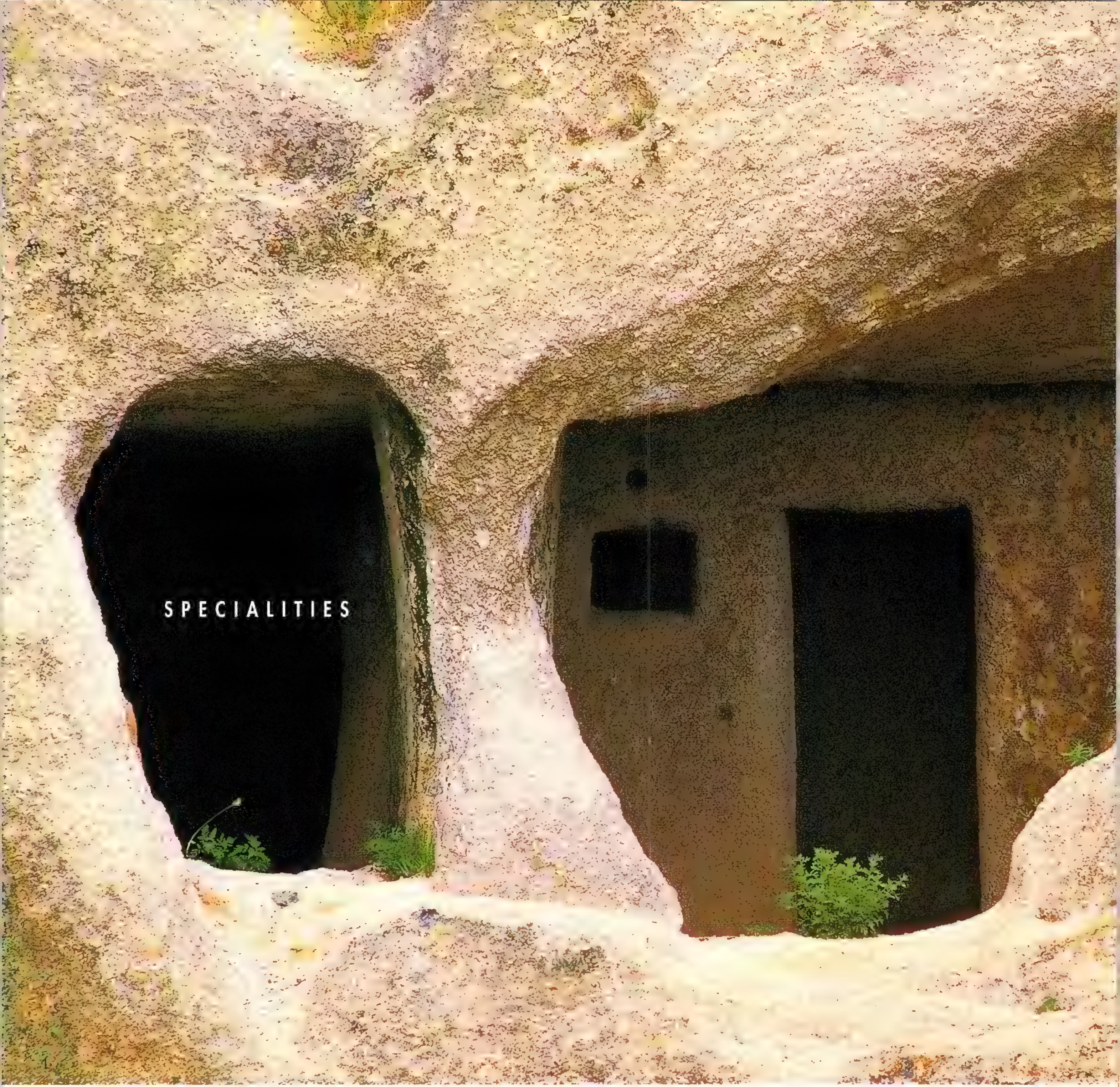
蘭州——額濟納環線騎行示意圖

Map of the Author's Lanzhou-Ejin Circular Route



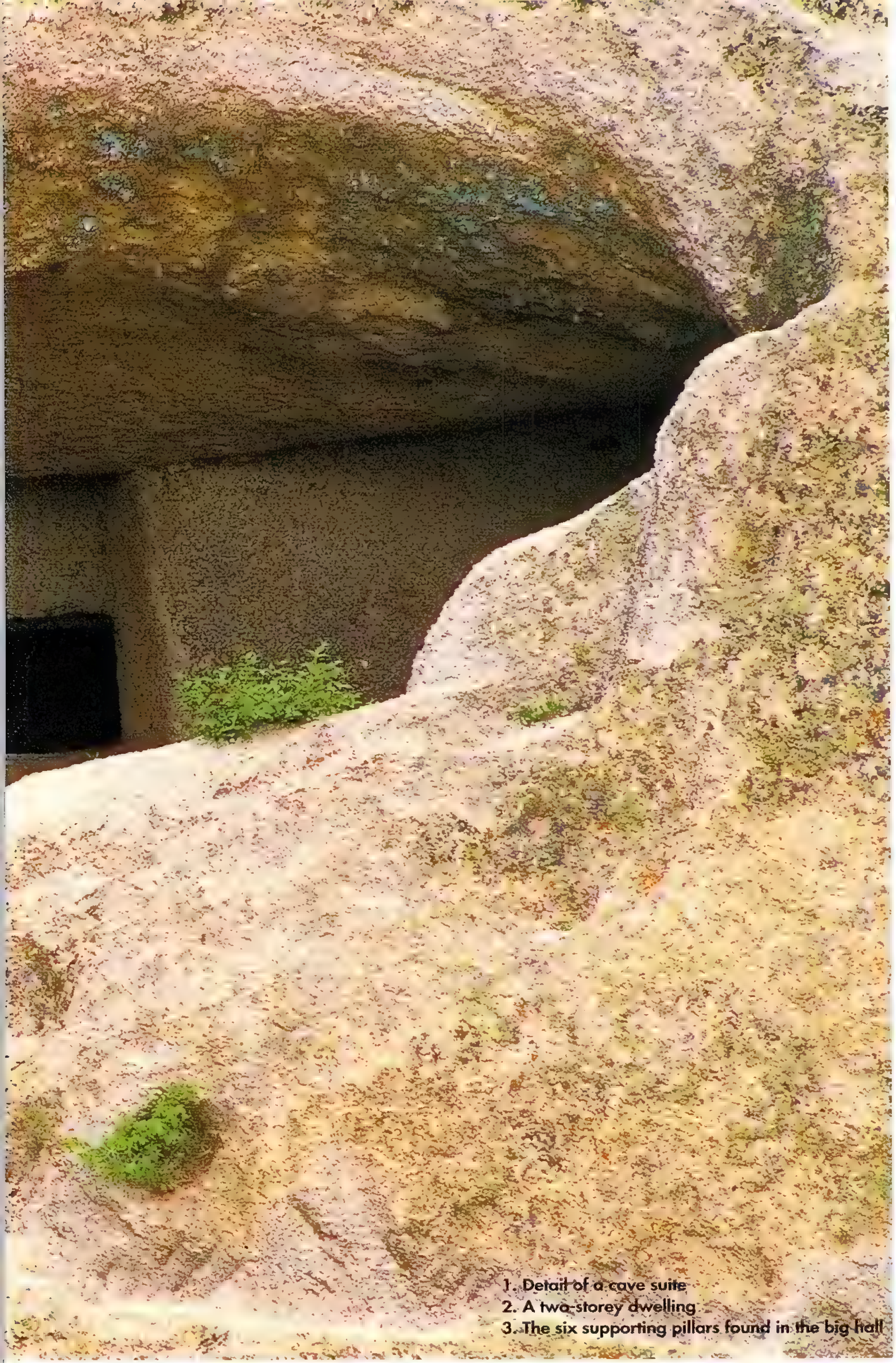
Tips for the Traveller:

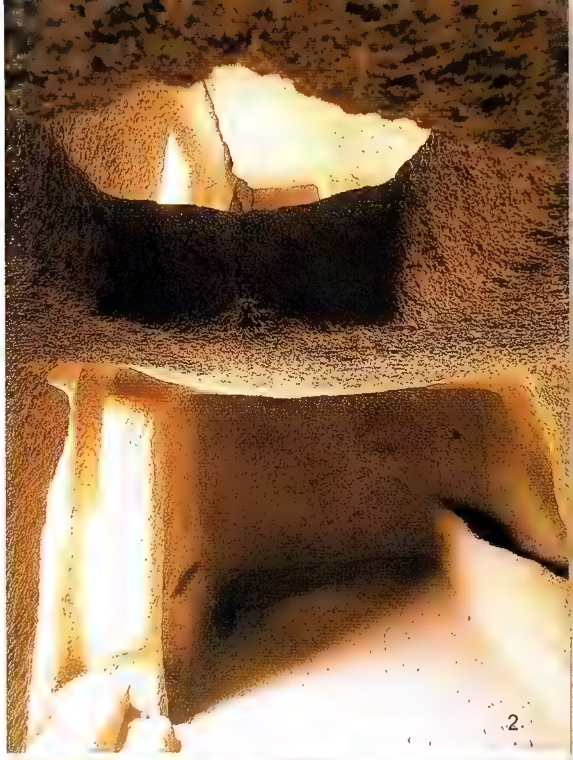
The circular route from Lanzhou to Ejin is about 5,000 kilometres. Many sections of the road are in rather poor condition. There is no regular coach service. The best way to go there is to take a train from Lanzhou to Zhangye, and then drive north to Ejin. Few lodgings can be found along the way but there are hotels in county towns and larger townships. The hotel in Ejin Banner is of decent standards and each rooms is equipped with a private bathroom. It is highly recommended to seek advice from banner official departments and obtain accurate information before setting out, particularly on a trip to see the autumn glory of the poplars.

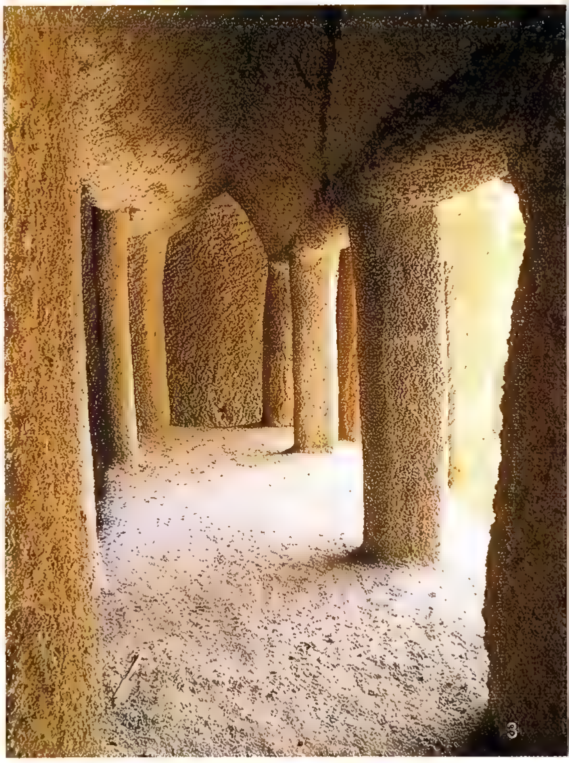


Mysterious Ancient Cliff Dwellings

Photos by Zhai Dongfeng Article by Li Juemin





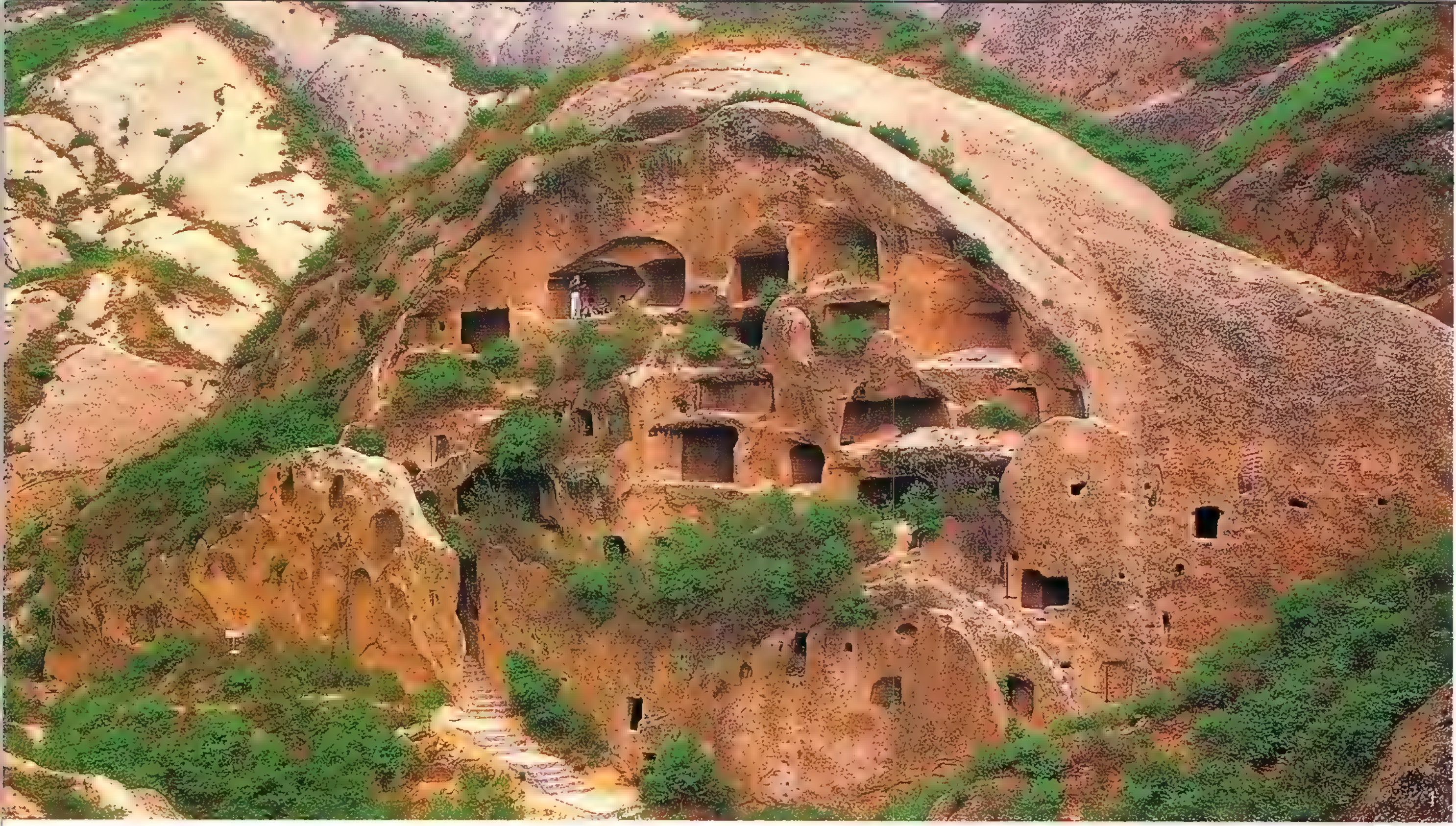


1. Detail of a cave suite
2. A two-storey dwelling
3. The six supporting pillars found in the big hall

Mystery surrounds the Guyaju, or Ancient Cliff Dwellings. No one truly knows who were their masters. Everyone who had seen these dwellings cut into the rock cliffs by people of ancient times talked extremely excited about them, enhancing our curiosity. So, we decided to go and see them with our own eyes.

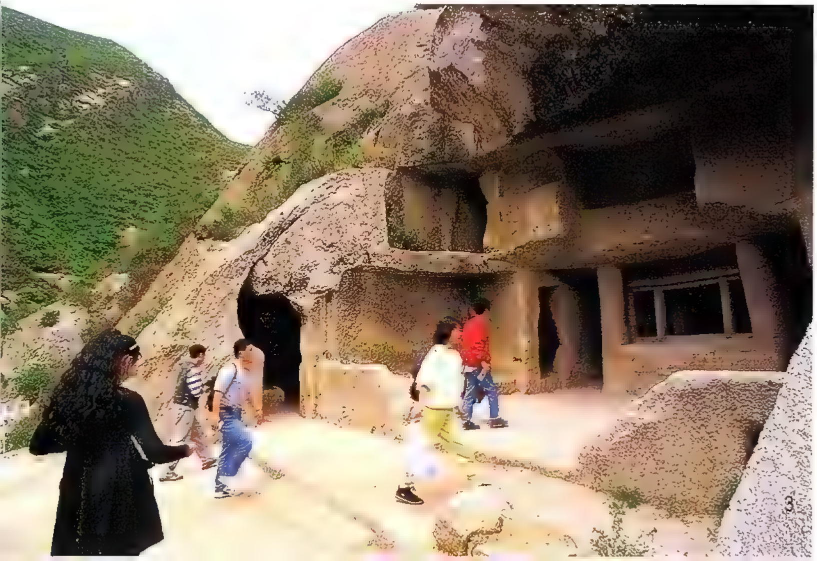
Guyaju is located at the foot of Jundu Mountain, over 20 kilometres to the northwest of Yanqing on the outskirts of Beijing. On arrival, we saw a narrow stone pass between two mountain cliffs, standing only three metres apart. The mountains were covered by thin vegetation – sparsely growing bushes, as well as grass and wild flowers in seasonal bloom. Large and small openings are cut into the rock cliffs on both sides, apparently traces of a gate installation. High up on the west side of the cliff is an irregular-sized cave, large enough to hold two people. A probable sentry post, it is not easy to find and would easily keep its guards out of the rain and wind. One kilometre further on, the winding pass gradually narrows and becomes tranquil. At the widest part ahead (about a metre wide), holes again appear on both sides of the cliffs. Perhaps this was where the second gate was installed. No doubt, the site was a good defence in ancient times – a place where one alert guard could prevent ten thousand enemies getting through.

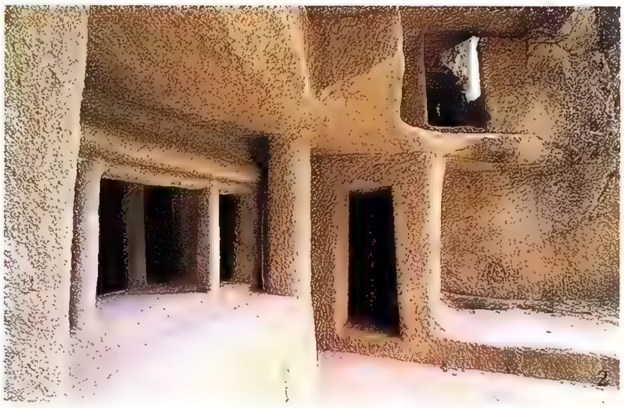
Further up, we were astonished by the sight of several dozen cave dwellings cut into the sheer rocky cliffs of a bread-shaped mountain. The dwelling gates are in various shapes – round, square,



oblong, triangular – all neatly arranged, forming a vertical village. Along the precipitous cliff surface narrow stairways have been cut with chisels to connect dwellings on different layers. We held the cable and cautiously climbed up the staircases to the caves.

What we saw inside the caves was even more surprising. Most of the caves are large and spacious. There are three-chamber ones, two-chamber ones as well as single-chamber ones; there are also two-storey dwellings, with an inside staircase. In most of the caves, even the single-chamber ones, there are beds, tables, stoves, doors, windows, and even chimneys and water troughs – all made of stone. The doors are apparently double – obviously not for safety, but for keeping out the biting wind. Some of the caves are linked, and the largest room has enough space to hold some one hundred people. Over the northern cliff, there is a four-chamber cave in two tiers, large enough for six horses. In it there are two troughs for feeding the horses; the upper chambers are apparently used to store fodder. There is even a big trough to store water. Evidently these ancient people were excellent equestrians.

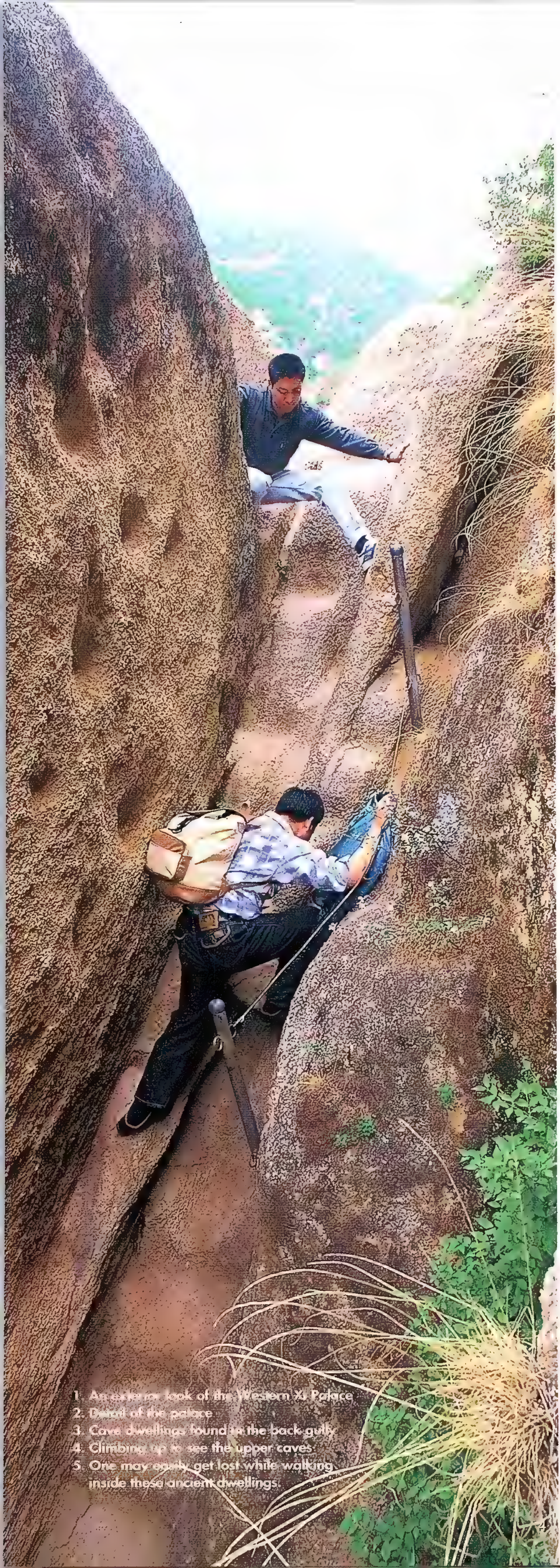




All the caves showed superb craftsmanship with the traces left by chisels looking extremely neat.

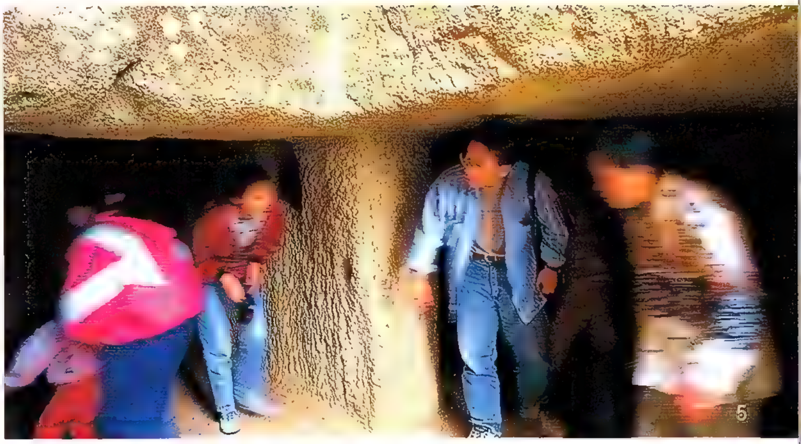
With increasing interest, we walked along the staircase by the cliff to the back gully where a large platform stood half way up the sheer cliff. Into this hard rock two very large caves have been carved, one on top of the other, like a two-storey building. In the front, there is a huge stone table. On both sides of the stone table, six stone pillars support the upper cave. Several smaller caves dot the inside of the large cave. Some local people call it "Guantangzi" (official chamber) while others called it "The Hall of Golden Chimes" (hall where the emperor held audiences). It is said that there was originally a horizontal board in the cave, inscribed with the words "County Court for Justice". Such evidence shows indeed that a very impressive figure, perhaps even a king, once occupied this site.

Altogether, there are more than one hundred large and small caves carved into these cliffs. Such a huge project must have lasted for quite some time. Yet, these cliff dwellings leave us with many puzzles: What tools did the ancient people use to carve out the caves? And why did they choose such a remote place to live?



1. An exterior look of the Western Xi Palace
2. Detail of the palace
3. Cave dwellings found in the back gully
4. Climbing up to see the upper caves
5. One may easily get lost while walking inside these ancient dwellings.

古崖居



Who Were The Real Masters of the Ancient Cave Dwellings?

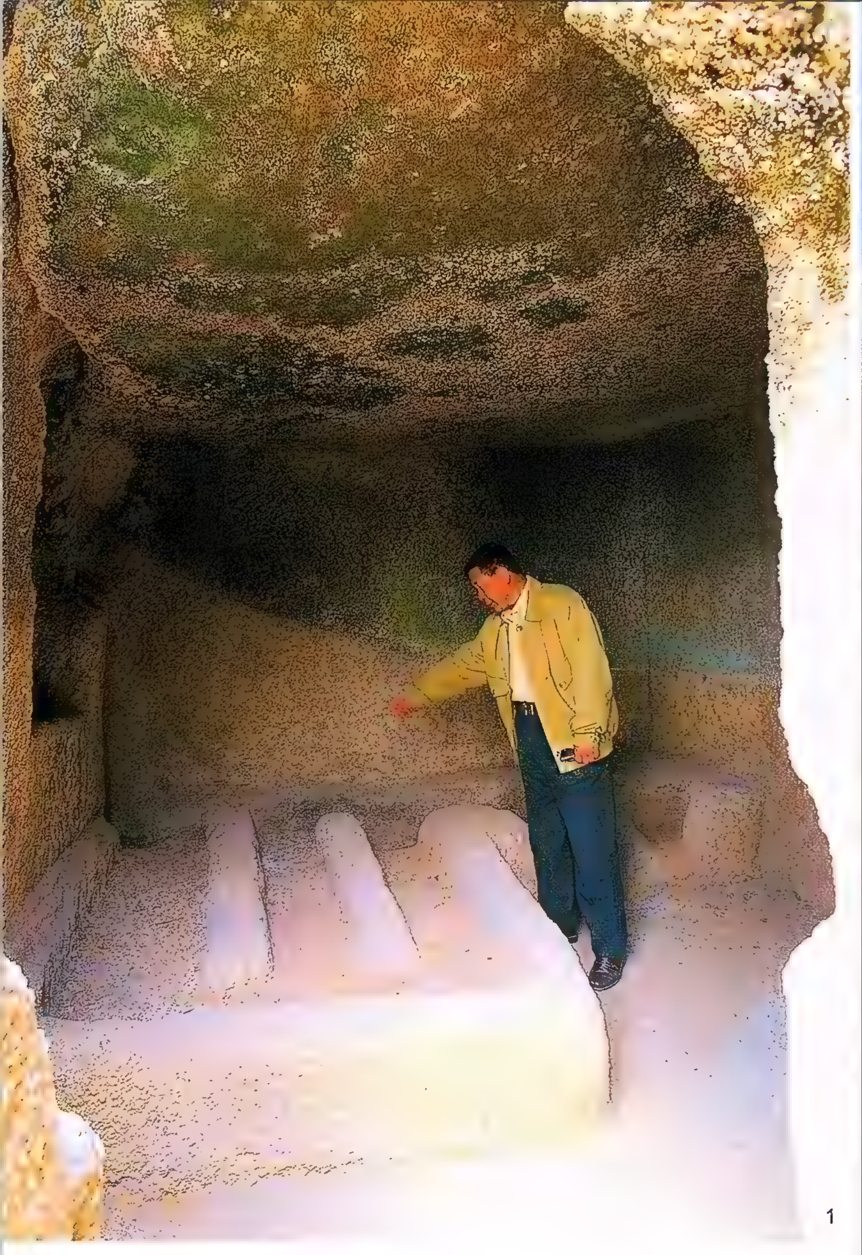
During the second general survey of cultural relics conducted by the Beijing Municipal Cultural Relics Administration in 1984, seven groups of hand-carved caves were discovered at Zhangshanying Town in Haituo Mountain.

One group of these caves is located in the Donggou Gully, 2.5 kilometres to the northwest of Dongmenying Village, Zhangshanying Town. The cave dwellings are divided into three groups, scattered over the cliffs in the front and back gullies. Also, on the east cliff between the front and back gullies, a large cave has been found.

The people of Dongmenying Village felt Donggou represented luck to the village and kept its existence a secret for a long time. Since their discovery in 1984, many people have visited and studied these caves. In 1990, the site was listed as a key cultural relic site under the protection of the municipal government and named "Guyaju" (literally "Ancient Cliff Cave Dwellings").

Opinions vary regarding the date the caves were carved and their occupants. The Yanqing County Administration of Cultural Relics holds that these caves were carved by the people of the Western Xi.

Donggou was presumably the royal abode of the king of the Western Xi, and the other caves would have been residences of other chiefs of the tribe. According to records in the "New History of Five Dynasties" compiled by Ouyang Xiu, each of the Xi and Qidan (Khitan) ethnic groups had a population of a few hundred thousand and an army of 30,000. The Xi were an ancient minority ethnic group in northern China. They had relations with various imperial courts in northern China, particularly those which took Beijing as the capital. From time to time, they were at war with the Tang Empire and were thus referred to as the "two barbarian tribes" Most of the Xi people were engaged in hunting and farming. Superb at riding horses and archery, they were famous for being gallant fighters. The ancestors of the Xi were the Shanrong and Wuhuan, two tribes who had a tradition of digging caves.



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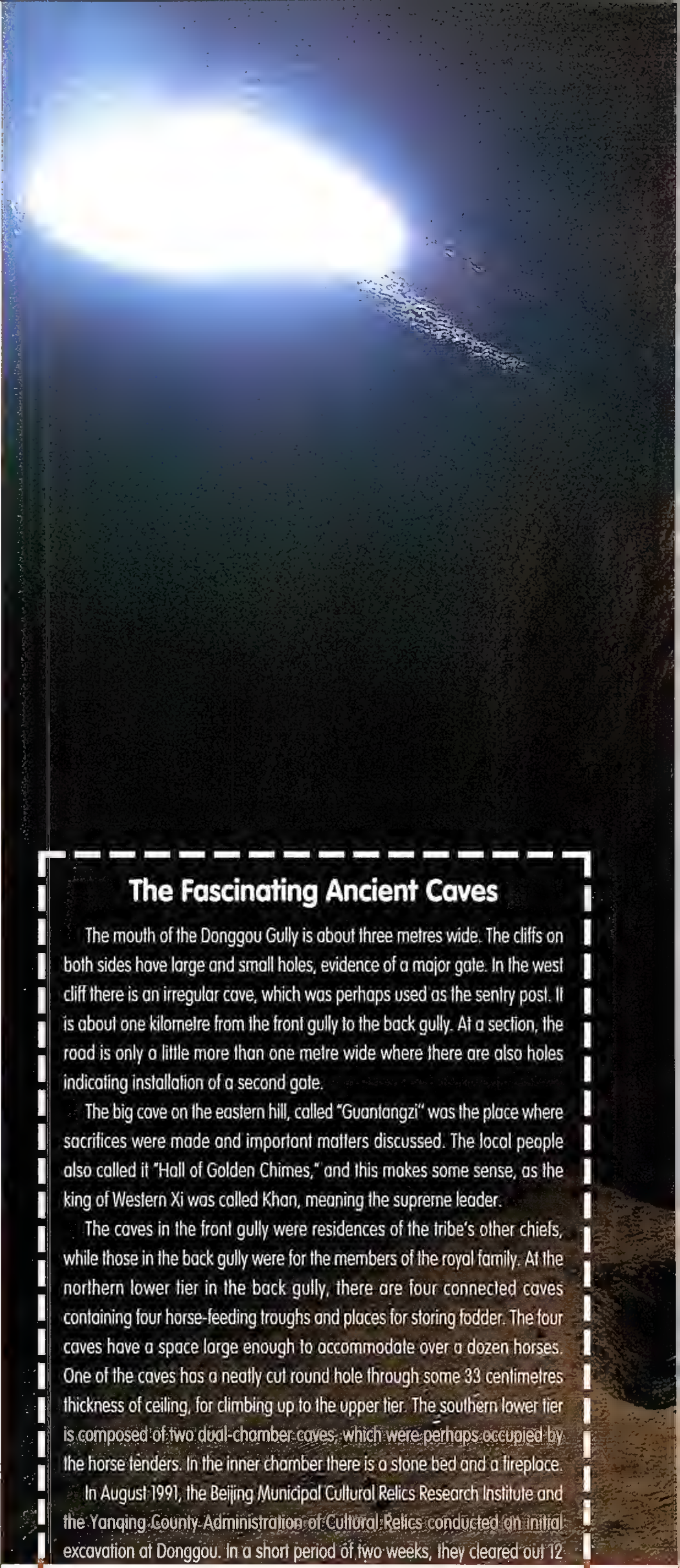

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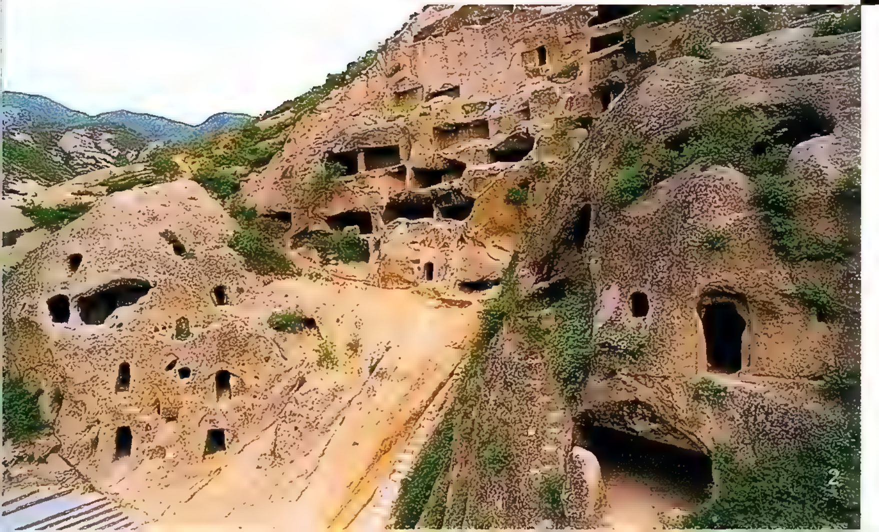


2

The Fascinating Ancient Caves

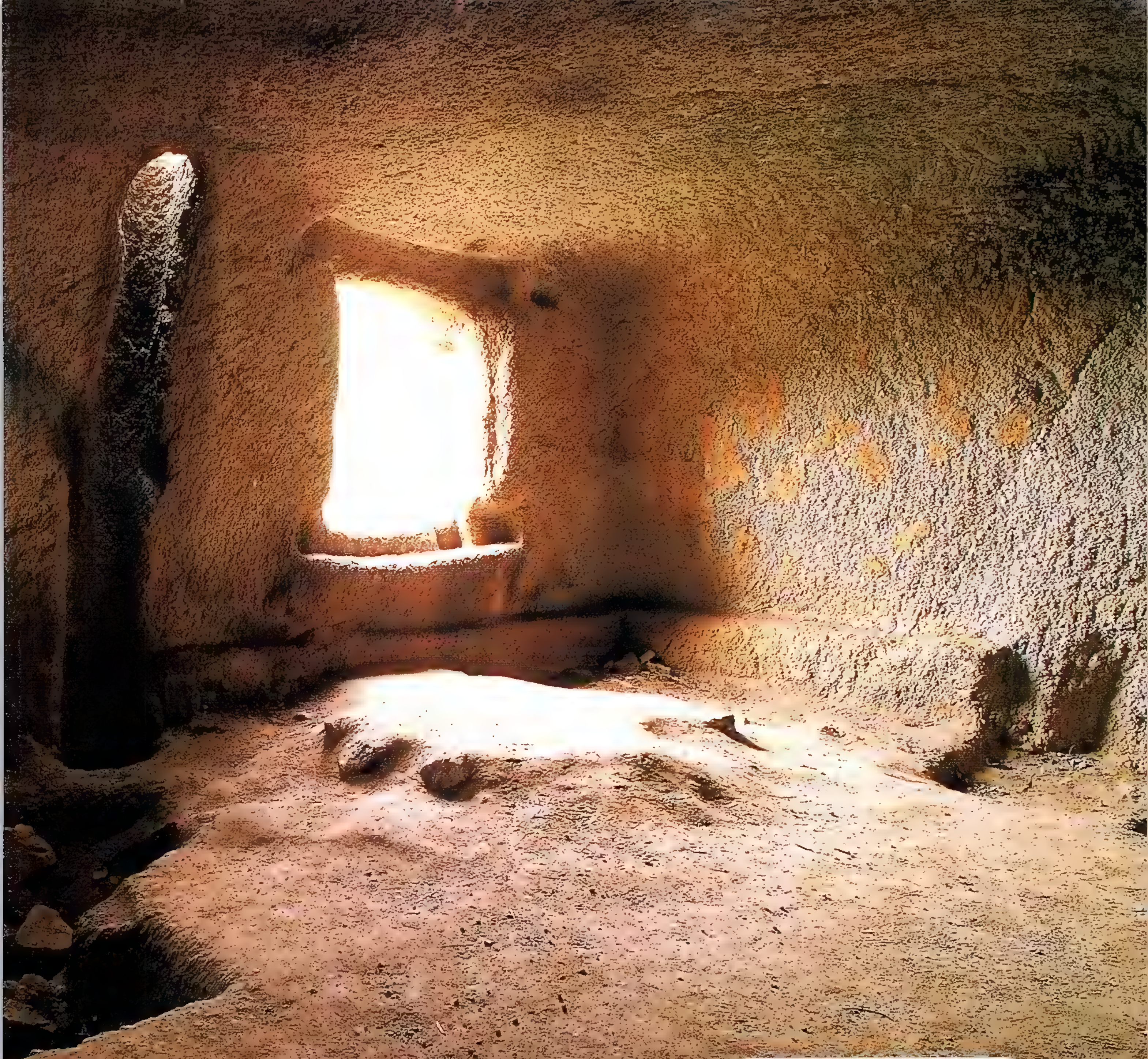
The mouth of the Donggou Gully is about three metres wide. The cliffs on both sides have large and small holes, evidence of a major gate. In the west cliff there is an irregular cave, which was perhaps used as the sentry post. It is about one kilometre from the front gully to the back gully. At a section, the road is only a little more than one metre wide where there are also holes indicating installation of a second gate.

The big cave on the eastern hill, called "Guantangzi" was the place where sacrifices were made and important matters discussed. The local people also called it "Hall of Golden Chimes," and this makes some sense, as the king of Western Xi was called Khan, meaning the supreme leader.

The caves in the front gully were residences of the tribe's other chiefs, while those in the back gully were for the members of the royal family. At the northern lower tier in the back gully, there are four connected caves containing four horse-feeding troughs and places for storing fodder. The four caves have a space large enough to accommodate over a dozen horses. One of the caves has a neatly cut round hole through some 33 centimetres thickness of ceiling, for climbing up to the upper tier. The southern lower tier is composed of two dual-chamber caves, which were perhaps occupied by the horse tenders. In the inner chamber there is a stone bed and a fireplace.

In August 1991, the Beijing Municipal Cultural Relics Research Institute and the Yanqing County Administration of Cultural Relics conducted an initial excavation at Donggou. In a short period of two weeks, they cleared out 12 caves with unique features, discovering in the process a Tang-dynasty bronze ladle, broken pieces of a Tang-dynasty pottery basin which could be basically restored, a piece of an iron tool difficult to date, as well as broken pieces of pottery from the Tang, Liao and Yuan dynasties. According to historical records, the Kingdom of Western Xi survived for about 30 years, making it reasonable to find artefacts of the Tang and Liao dynasties in these caves.

After driving out the Mongols and recapturing Dadu (now Beijing), the Ming court abolished the Longqing Prefecture and moved its 35,800 families to the south of the Juyongguan Pass in 1371. In 1414, an imperial edict was issued to restore the prefecture. During the 43 years the prefecture was abolished, there must be people who, unwilling to migrate, fled deep into the mountains to stay in these caves. The Jin and Yuan artefacts discovered in these caves were probably brought in by them. Also discovered in the caves were a small quantity of broken pieces of Ming and Qing artefacts. It is assumed that they have been brought in by the villagers of Dongmenying.

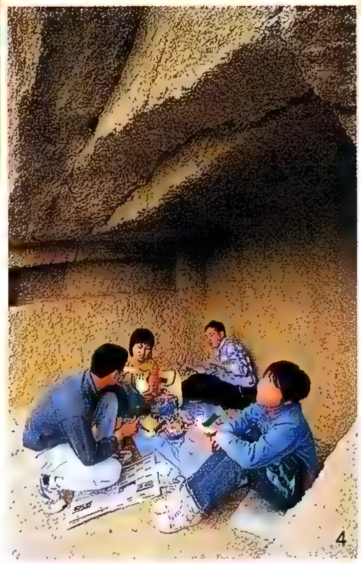


Tips for the Traveller

Guyaju is located at the foot of Jundu Mountain some 20 kilometres to the northwest of the county seat of Yanqing. One can take the No. 919 long-distance bus at Deshengmen in Beijing to reach Yanqing. The bus goes regularly at half-hour intervals, with the first bus starting from Deshengmen at 6:00 a.m. and the last going from Yanqing at 6.00 p.m. From Yanqing, one can hire a taxi for about 200 yuan to go to the Longqing Gorge, the Exhibition of Shanrong Tombs and Guyaju.

Yanqing provides convenient hotel accommodation, including: Xinfeng Hotel (standard room, 240 yuan per night); Jiuzhou Hotel (standard room, 140 yuan per night); Yanqing Hotel (standard room, 314 yuan per night)

1. A stone bed found in one of the caves
2. A total of 91 caves have been found in the front gully.
3. Marks of window, stove and chimney remain clear in this cave.
4. Picnicking inside a cave



粵唯鮮酒家
粵唯鮮酒家

1

Tianjin – A Northern China Port City

Photos by Shan Xiaogang
Article by Gloria Shang

The ancient Grand Canal stimulated its urbanisation; Haihe River runs through the city centre, providing the city with life and vitality; and the Bohai Bay channels it to a broader openness.

Tianjin is one of the few metropolises in northern China who have been blessed by nature with waters. These waters in Tianjin's territory have not only enhanced the metropolis' charm, but played an important role in the port city's shake-up.

Tianjin is one of the four Chinese municipalities under the direct administration of the Central Government. It is the largest sea port in northern China and is also the country's second largest industrial and commercial city (next to Shanghai). Located in the heart of the Bohai Bay area and close to Beijing, Tianjin played an important role in China's history, leaving it a rich cultural legacy.

Roaming through Tianjin, you would find its urban architecture a congenial combination of the old and the new, the traditional and the modern, and the West and the East. Living in such an atmosphere and being nourished by the Haihe River and the Bohai Sea, the people of Tianjin have created a multi-cultural life style unique unto themselves.

A Land Touched by the Heavenly Son

Tianjin is seated on new land which, until a few thousand years ago, was covered by the sea. People began to reside in this area in the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.). After the Grand Canal (which runs from Beijing to Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province via Tianjin) was dug during the Sui Dynasty (581-618), one of the villages in this area, Zhiguzhai, became an important commercial centre by the river. During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the village developed into a prosperous city, and was given the name Tianjin by Emperor Yongle, which literally means "the point where the son of heaven once forded the river".

As a result of the Treaty of Peking signed at the end of the Second Opium War, Tianjin was designated as an open port for foreign trade. Concessions were earmarked for foreign residents from Western power nations, who enjoyed various privileges in the city. Like Shanghai, Tianjin eventually became an international metropolis in the Far East.

Today's Tianjin covers an area of 11,900 square kilometres, and has a population of over 9.48 million, with 3.69 million living in the central urban region. Under the municipal administration are 13 districts and five counties. It is the 15th largest city in the world.

2

An Open Powerhouse

Tianjin became an industrial and commercial base of the state since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. In the 1980s with policies of reform and opening to the outside world, the old port city was revitalised. It is now one of the powerhouses in the country's modernisation drive.

Tianjin has achieved unprecedented progress over the past few years, owing to the hard work of the Tianjin people and the various preferential policies granted by the Central Government. This powerful economic centre has 38,000 industrial enterprises with 2.17 million employees, whose production value reached 210.9 billion yuan (US$25.5 billion) in 1996. Its industrial production value increased 220 per cent over the past five years, ranking second among the country's big cities. During the same period, the city's gross domestic product increased by 168 per cent, with an annual growth rate of 13.4 per cent. Meanwhile, Tianjin residents' per capita income increased 11.3 per cent annually.

Facing Out to the World

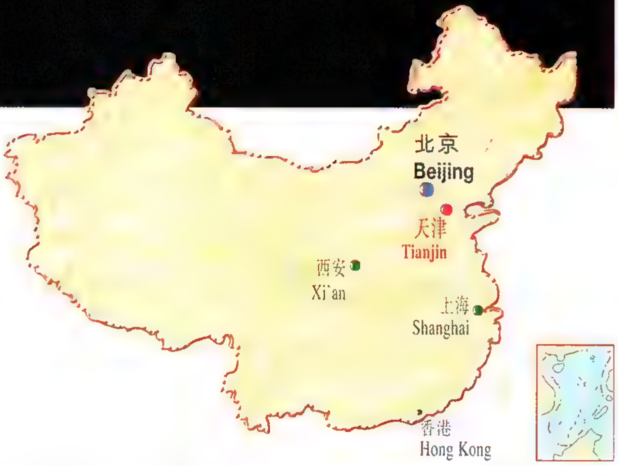
Designated as one of the first open coastal cities, Tianjin is a vanguard in attracting foreign investment. By the first half of 1997, Tianjin had approved 10,969 foreign-funded enterprises with US$24 billion of contracted foreign funds, of which US$7 billion had already been invested.

The Port of Tianjin is the largest man-made port in China, and is the Chinese capital Beijing's gateway to the sea. With an annual handling capacity of 68 million tons, the port has established business relations with more than 300 ports in over 160 countries and regions. Benefiting from a convenient transport network on sea, air, and land, Tianjin's foreign trade has expanded rapidly. Its import and export volume in 1996 was

1

US$21.7 billion.

To further develop and open up its economy, the municipal government has adopted a series of measures,including building the Tianjin Port Free Trade Zone (TPFTZ). Established in May 1991, it is a demonstration model of Tianjin's new strategy for economic development. Located in the New Port District, TPFTZ is a special open zone enjoying the most preferential investment policies from the state. Inside the bonded zone, foreign businesses are free to manage international trade and set up commercial bonded warehousing businesses. Export-oriented enterprises are allowed tax exemptions for imported equipment, materials for building workshops and depots, as well as raw materials and spare parts.



Another representative of the new Tianjin is its Baotai Industrial Park, located in the south of the Tianjin Port Free Trade Zone extension area. With a total area of one square kilometre, the park is designed with high-tech industries in mind. Since its founding in February 1997, a series of infrastructure projects have been finished, including power, water and gas supplies, roads, and communications and central heating systems.

2

The city government plans to accelerate the construction of the new beach area and further develop tertiary industry, so as to build Tianjin into a top international commercial, trade and financial centre and a modern port city in the first decade of the next century.

TOURING TIANJIN: A Trip Amidst the Past and the Present

Tianjin, a city rich in folklore and cultural traditions, is also one where you can find the most modern entertainment. And its suburbs treat you to many scenic spots and historical sites. In many ways, Tianjin represents China's history of modernisation. A city tour will update you on both its colourful past and progressive present.

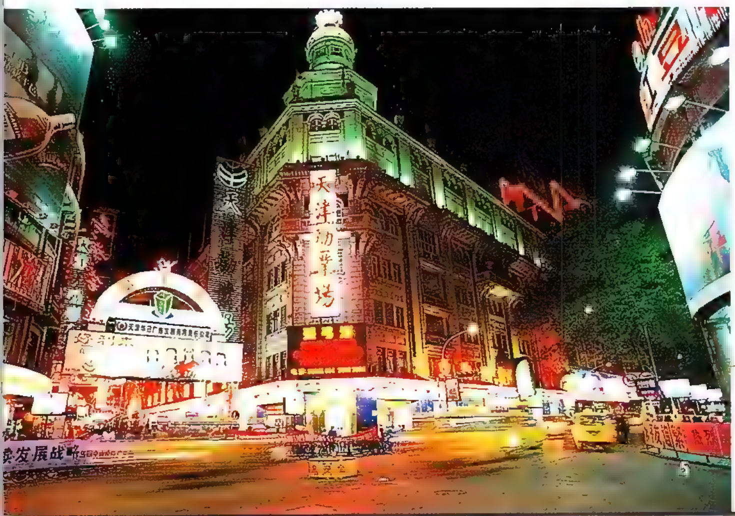
The Old Cultural Street

The best place to see Tianjin's cultural traditions and customs is along the north-eastern part of Laojie (Old Street) and the square in front of Mazu Palace. Around the square are theatres and entertainment halls, where fine performances are given on almost all festival days. A spectacular annual Imperial Festival is held here on the 23rd day of the third lunar month. The 600 metre-long "old" street is home to Qing-dynasty (1644-1911) architectural classics – with grey walls and colourfully decorated streamers – along with shops selling traditional souvenirs, including Zhang's clay figurines, Yangliuqing New Year pictures, and curios of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing dynasties. It takes more than an hour to walk all the way through the Old Cultural Street.

Quanyechang and Other Theme Streets

Situated at the intersection of Binjiang and Peace streets, Quanyechang (Encouraging Business Bazaar) is an old commercial establishment built in 1928. A large-scale renovation carried out in 1994 updated the shopping centre's facilities and expanded its business area. The hundreds of shops there sell all types of consumer goods.

Another attraction reflecting Tianjin's commercial nature are streets that specialise in one particular commodity. Clothing Street, located near Old Street, offers fashions from over 100 shops operated by the state, collectives and individuals. Food Street in Nanshi (Southern Market) looks like an ancient walled city enclosed in a circle of neat three-storey buildings. Inside this "walled city" are over 100 establishments, each having its own special dishes or local delicacies, such as the Goubuli stuffed buns, Guifaxiang fried dough twists, and "ear-hole" fried cake. Also nearby is Hotel Street, where the Hua Fu Palace Hotel is located. Shenyang – or Curios – Street, contains over 100 shops and 300 kiosks and stalls dealing in a wide range of goods.



Haihe River

A symbol of Tianjin, the Haihe River spans 70 kilometres across the city proper. It starts around the Jingang Bridge in the west suburbs and ends at Dagukou, where it flows into the Bohai Sea. New buildings and entertainment enterprises compete with the riverside open spaces. The river banks are a popular place for morning exercise and family get-togethers in the evening. For an insight into the local lifestyle, take a walk along the river.

Tianjin TV & Radio Tower

The Tianjin TV & Radio Tower, built in 1991, stands 415 metres above a lake. It is complete with a revolving restaurant rotating round every 45 to 60 minutes and with seats for 200 people. Guests can enjoy a leisurely meal while gazing at a panoramic view of Tianjin.

Muslim Street and the Great Mosque

The Hui – Chinese Muslims – came to Tianjin in the mid-14th century during the Ming Dynasty, and had reached a population of 30,000 by the early 20th century. Today, despite the changes in the city's booming economy and social structure, the Muslims still observe their traditional way of life. In the Muslim quarter you will not only find mosques and Muslim restaurants, but also primary schools for Muslim children.

Situated in Xiaohuo Lane of Hongqiao District, the Great Mosque was built in 1644 during the Qing Dynasty. The mosque consists of four major structures, all with luxuriously decorated paintings, carvings and banisters. Sixty-one horizontal plaques and couplets, with both Chinese and Arabic inscriptions, grace the Great Mosque's walls.

Previous page: 1. A restaurant housed in a Western-style building
2. Nostalgic items like this old-style street lamp can still be found in Tianjin.

1. **Tianjin New Port at dawn**
2. **Liberation Bridge — one of numerous bridges on the Haihe River**
3. **Trace of history — detail of the carvings on a Western architectural building**
4. **Zhang's clay figurines: *Grandma and Grandson***
5. **Quanyechang, one of the major shopping centres in Tianjin**

华旭商厦
YUE-SAI 羽西
专为亚洲
The Best The
For As
和平商業大厦
新興時裝商厦
百货大楼
食品
津门父老
APPLE SHOP

Old Catholic Churches

Xikai Church is situated at the western entrance of Binjiang Road in the city centre. This 45-metre-high structure is built in the shape of a cross and has 1,585 square metres of interior space. Three towers, each with a green dome, head skyward. Xikai Church has been the leading Catholic church in Tianjin since it was completed in 1916. The church is still used for masses and other religious gatherings.

Seaview Tower, located at Shizilin (Lion Forest) Bridge on Hebei Road, is also a Catholic church. Originally built in 1869 by French Catholics, the church has been destroyed and rebuilt many times, with the present building being completed in 1904. It remains a religious attraction of Tianjin.

Dabei Zen Temple

This famous Buddhist temple has two distinct sections: the Old Temple built in 1669 and the New Temple built in 1940. The Old Temple contains hundreds of Buddhist statues in bronze, iron, stone or wood of various dynasties from the Wei (220-265) to the Qing (1644-1911). Most of these priceless relics were seized by Customs officers from smugglers who looted them from the famous Yungang and Longmen grottoes in Northwest China's Gansu and Central China's Henan respectively.

Tianjin Museum of Science and Technology

This modern and comprehensively equipped museum, built in 1995, intends to popularise science for everyone. One of the largest of its kind in the world, the museum is architecturally unique with its main structure shaped like a bridge with a 30-metre-diameter ball in the middle. Exhibits displayed in the museum offer knowledge, stimulate interest and invite participation, unravelling the ABCs of science to visitors. Its Universe Theatre presents breath-taking 360° panoramic movies.

Seaside Amusement Park

Tanggu District boasts a seaside man-made beach for swimmers of all ages. The rest of the park is equipped with other facilities, such as water slides, hot springs, restaurants, and hotels. Bus service is available at the city centre, or one can take a ferry. The latter option allows the traveller a chance to see the Great Sea Gate Bridge, Bohai Children's World, the Haihe River mouth, and Dagukou Battlement on the way.

Mt. Panshan and Other Attractions in Jixian County

Mt. Panshan is situated about 100 kilometres from Tianjin's city centre, in Jixian County. Covered with luxuriant forests, it is one of the 15 most attractive scenic spots in China. From its main peak (864 metres above sea level), tourists can view the Great Wall to the north and the Taihang Mountains to the west. Nestled in the hills are numerous Buddhist temples.

Jixian, a suburban county of Tianjin, is full of historic and scenic spots. The Drum Tower of the Qing Dynasty is located in the centre of the town of Jixian. The Tang-dynasty (618-907) White Pagoda is out in southwest Jixian, while in the northern part of the county there remains a stretch of well-preserved stratum section, documented as 2 billion to 850 million years old. Dule Temple (Temple of Solitary Joy) in northern Jixian a first built in the Tang Dynasty and later rebuilt in the Liao Dynasty (916-1125), contains one of China's largest terracotta statues – a boddhisattva with 10 heads. At Huangyaguan Pass, 25 kilometres north of Jixian, you can climb the Great Wall on the slopes of the sheer, jagged Wangmaoding Mountain. This section of the wall was strategically important in ancient times.

1. **A flourishing commercial street**
2. **The Haihe River running through Tianjin**
3. **"Donkey roll", one of the most popular Tianjin snacks**
4. **The magnificent Science Palace**

FOR YOUR REFERENCE

How to Get There

Tianjin can be reached by air from most major Chinese cities, including Hong Kong, from where an Air China flight departs for Tianjin every day. Since Tianjin is only 120 kilometres from Beijing, it is easy to go from Beijing, where you can choose from air, train, bus, or even taxi. It takes about two hours to drive from Beijing to Tianjin.

Where to Stay

Finding a place to stay should never be the problem when you are in Tianjin. Following are just a few suggestions:

Sheraton Tianjin Hotel *****
Tel: (22) 2334 3388 Fax: (22) 2335 8740
Add: Zijinshan Road, Hexi District, Tianjin
Postcode: 300074

Hyatt Hotel Tianjin ****
Tel: (22) 2331 8888 Fax: (22) 2335 8740
Add: 219 Jiefang Road (N), Heping District, Tianjin Postcode: 300042

Astor Hotel ****
Tel: (22) 2331 1688 Fax: (22) 2331 6282
Add: 33 Tai'erzhuang Road, Heping District, Tianjin Postcode: 300042

Hua Fu Palace Grand Hotel ***
Tel: (22) 2734 7578 Fax: (22) 2734 7358
Add: Hotel Street, South Market, Heping District, Tianjin Postcode: 300021

Tiansheng Hotel **
Tel: (22) 2431 9903 Fax: (22)2438 9612
Add: 112 Liuwei (Sixth) Road, Hedong District, Tianjing Postcode: 300170

Specialities:

1. Goubuli Stuffed Buns: A special kind of stuffed bun famous in Tianjin for over a hundred years. The Goubuli Bun Shop has now 89 branch restaurants across the country. Its general shop at 77 Shandong Road, Heping District offers 90 varieties of Goubuli stuffed buns and 200 dishes.

2. Guifaxiang Fried Dough Twists: Fried long, twisted strips are popular snacks in Tianjin, and Guifaxiang (also called "18th Street") is the most famous brand. The twists made by Guifaxiang Dough Twists Shop are aromatic, sweet, crunchy and crisp. They can be found at the Food Street.

3. Ear-Hole Fried Cake: Also a traditional Tianjin snack, the cake is made of quality and finely processed glutinous rice dough filled with bean paste. The wrapping of the finished cake is golden in colour, crisp and crunchy, while the filling is tender and sweet, with a lingering flavour.

Festival Activities

1. Mazu Temple Fair: Also called Imperial Fair because some Qing-dynasty emperors once made their special trips to Tianjin for the event, it is held annually in memory of Mazu, or Heavenly Goddess, on her birthday – the 23rd day of the third lunar month. The fair lasts several days, during which various activities are held, including colourful folk performances.

2. Rose Festival: Various activities are held in Tianjin during May 17-24 to mark the rose blossoming season. In addition to a rose competition, there are also opera performances, food fairs and business talks.

3. Yangliuqing New Year Picture Festival: During the period between the Spring Festival and the Lantern Festival (the 15th day of the first lunar month), a series of activities are held in Yangliuqing, hometown of the Yangliuqing New Year Picture. Artists and New Year picture fans come from Tianjin and throughout the country to participate in exhibitions and seminars focusing on wood-block paintings and lanterns.

Travel Agencies:

Tianjin Overseas Tourist Corporation
Tel: (22) 2835 8479 Fax: (22) 2835 2619
Add: 22 Youyi Road, Hexi District, Tianjin
Postcode: 300074

Tianjin China Travel Service
Tel: (22) 2353 9948
Fax: 2353 7916
Add: 16 Pingshan Road, Hexi District, Tianjin Postcode: 300074

China Youth Travel Service Tianjin
Tel: (22) 2311 5017
Fax: (22) 2332 4257
Add: 11 Munan Road, Heping District, Tianjin Postcode: 300050

Weather:

Tianjin's weather is a semi-wet continental monsoon climate. During the first four months of the year, occasional typhoons hit the city. Annual rainfall is 500-700 mm. Tianjin's summer and winter are its longest seasons, with spring and autumn shorter. July is the hottest month when temperatures can go up to 26℃ and higher, and January is the coldest, when temperatures may drop to -4℃ or lower.

1. **The general shop where the famous Goubuli buns are made**
2. **Zhang's Clay Figurines are in great demand.**
3. **The shop where Guifaxiang fried dough twists originated.**

Geese and Camels in Lop Nur, Xinjiang

Geese and Camels have been found in Lop Nur, a desolate wasteland believed to be a "death zone" in Northwest China's Xinjiang. A flock of wild geese was seen flying to the south in October by a group of petroleum geologists. Zoologists who have visited the place a number of times also believe that about 300 wild camels live in Lop Nur.

Lop Nur used to be China's second largest inland lake, but it turned to desert 2,000 years ago after the Tarim River shifted course. It is debated among scientists how these wild animals survive without water in a place like Lop Nur.

Ruins Discovered, Hubei

Chinese archaeologists have recently discovered three ancient ruins in Central China. All belonging to the Old Stone Age, the ruins are located along the Hanjiang River, and are separated from each other by several kilometres. More than 300 stone-made tools, including picks and axes, were found in the ruins. In one of the three in Yunxian County, an ancient human skull fossil was found in May 1989. The new discovery will benefit the study on the Central China Culture.

Tomb Unearthed, Sichuan

An ancient tomb belonging to a Ming-dynasty duke and his wife has been unearthed in Jingjiang District of Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province. In the tomb where the couple were buried in separate rooms, all together 190 pieces of clay sculpture and pottery were found – leaving archaeologists to believe that the tomb had been robbed. The most prominent features of the tomb are its well-preserved structure and its beautiful sculptures.

Beijing University to Honour Centennial

Beijing University, one of China's most prestigious universities, will celebrate its 100th anniversary on May 4 this year. About 10,000 alumni from home and abroad will gather at the Great Hall of the People, joined by state leaders. A two-day forum on the next century's trends in higher education will also be held with the participation of the presidents of the world's most prestigious universities, including Harvard, Oxford, Stanford, Munich and Tokyo. In addition to a series of other academic exchanges and discussions, a set of stamps commemorating the centennial will be issued, and a new library will be completed in the university during this celebrating period.

Established as the Capital Grand School in 1898 under an imperial edict from Emperor Guangxu, Beijing University is one of the most celebrated universities in China.

More Flowers, Shandong

More than 20 new flower markets in addition to 400 flower shops have been opened in East China's Shandong Province. The province now has 10,000 hectares of land used for flower growing and over 1,000 enterprises involved in the flower industry. The province's total sales of flowers exceeded US$120 million in 1997. Shandong flowers are sold to Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou and 30 other domestic and foreign cities. Last year, the province made US$50 million from flower export.

In addition to traditional flowers such as peonies, roses, chrysanthemums, Chinese roses, orchids and azaleas, the province has introduced more than 30 flowering plants from other countries, including the Netherlands, the United States and Japan.

Ambitious Plan for Tourism, Taiyuan

Taiyuan, capital of North China's Shanxi Province, abounds with both historical relics and folk culture. The city plans to invest heavily to boost its tourism industry. Construction of the Fenhe River Tourism Zone (which costs of US$48 million) began in 1997 and will be completed in 1999. Another project, the Shentang Gully Zone, with an investment of US$144 million, is also under way and will open to public in 2000.

Sino-US Airlines Code Sharing

A code-sharing agreement was signed recently between China Eastern Airlines and American Airlines. According to the agreement, China Eastern Airlines will mark its own flight numbers on American Airlines' flights from Los Angeles or San Francisco to New York, Chicago, Washington D.C. and Dallas, etc. Meanwhile, American Airlines will also mark its flight numbers on China Eastern Airlines' flights from the United States to Shanghai and Beijing. This arrangement will lower operating costs, offering passengers lower air fares.

Fengyu Cave, Guangxi

More and more tourists are flocking to the newly discovered Fengyu Cave in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, which is believed to be the largest karst cave in the world.

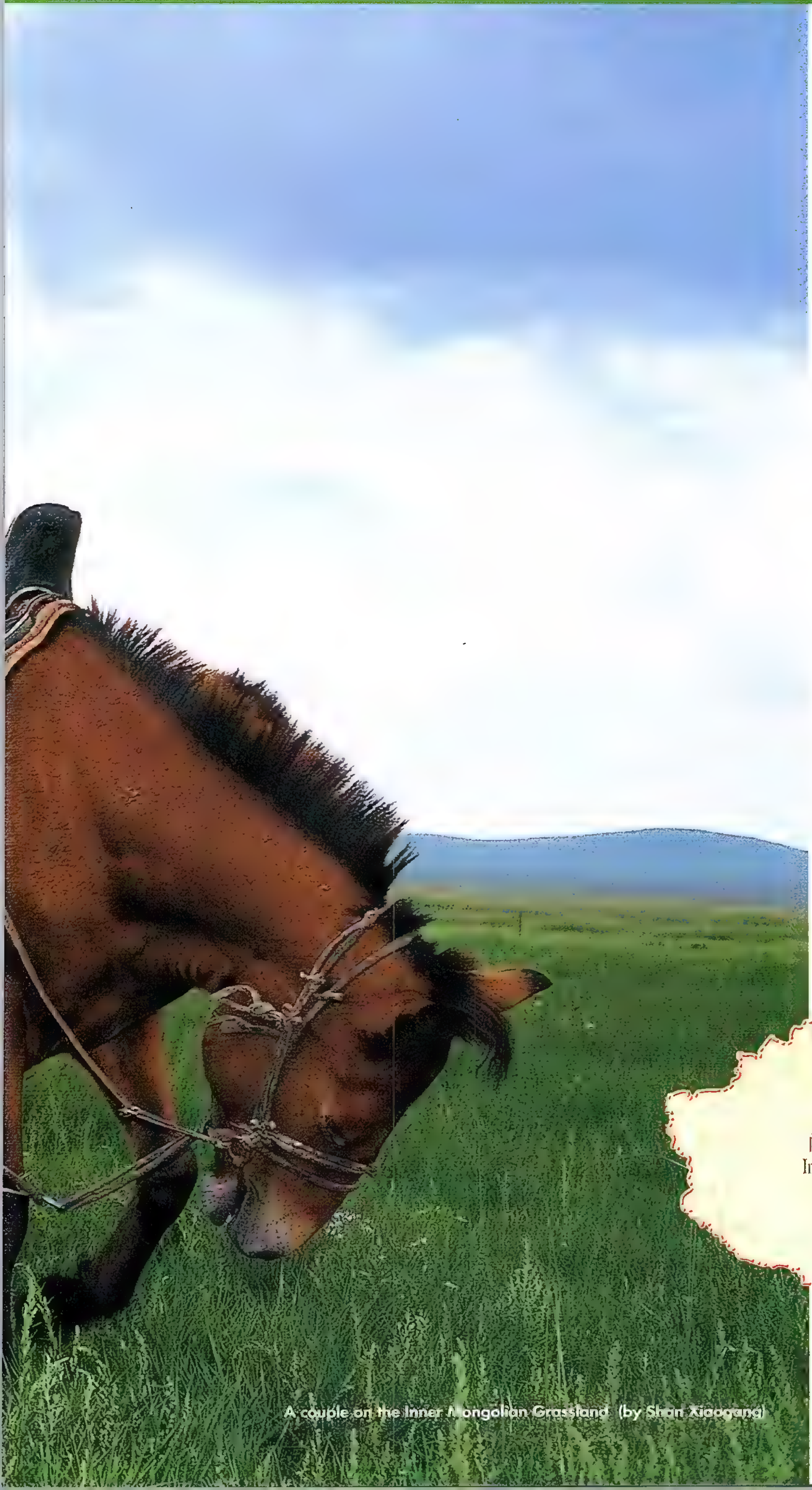
Fengyu Cave lies 104 kilometres from the scenic city Guilin. Occupying an area of 25,500 square metres, the cave has a 3.3-kilometre underground river running through it. Chinese and overseas investors have already spent more than 28 million yuan (US$3.37 million) to develop the cave and relevant facilities.

PEOPLES

THE MONGOLIANS

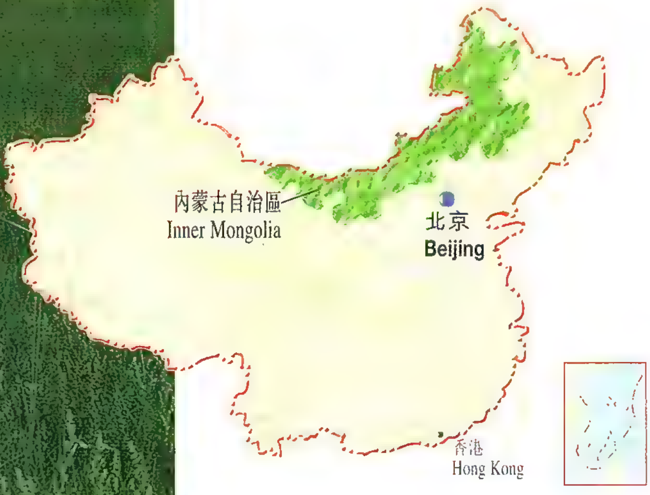
WARM AND GENEROUS PEOPLE

Photos by Peng Zhenge, Ebo   Article by Iris Wong



A couple on the Inner Mongolian Grassland (by Shan Xiaogang)

One of the major Chinese ethnic groups, the Mongolians mostly maintain their nomadic life Style. They live in movable yurts, eat beef, mutton and dairy foods, and are expert equestrians. Wrestling is the most popular sport, believed to best represent Mongolian men's characteristics — gallant, fearless and carefree.



Seventy percent of the Mongolians in China live in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, in an area of 1.2 million square kilometres along China's northern border region. Here, the vast Hulunbuir Grassland, the rich land irrigated by the Yellow River, the Ergun River and the Greater Hinggan Forests in the Northeast support well over two million people. The rest of the three million population live in the surrounding region and provinces of Xinjiang, Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang, Gansu, Qinghai, Hebei and Henan.

As early as in the 7th century, Mongolians were already moving westward. By the 12th century, they had spread to the upper reaches of the Onon, Herlen and Tuul rivers and east of the Hentiyn Mountains, sub-dividing as they moved. In the early 13th century, the Mongol tribe led by Genghis Khan unified the tribes of the region and in fact, it was only then that the term 'Mongol' was used to refer to the combined ethnic group. In 1271, the powerful Mongols conquered the Southern Song Dynasty founded by the Han Chinese and unified the whole of China, establishing its own Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).

In Inner Mongolia, the major economic lifeline is animal husbandry. Extensive pasture land provides ideal conditions for raising oxen and sheep, and to a lesser degree horses and camels. The Sanhe horse, Sanhe sheep, Ujimqin horse, Ujimqin sheep, fat-tail sheep and Alax camels are nationally famous breeds.

The fertile Hetao region (at the top of the Great Bend of the Yellow River) and the Tumchuan Plain south of the Yinshan Mountains are the main grain producers in Inner Mongolia, yielding wheat, corn, sorghum, soya beans and potatoes, in addition to flax, rape seeds, sugar beet and sweet melons.

The famous Yellow River carp flourishes in the Inner Mongolia section of the river. In addition, lakes such as the Hulun, Buir, Uliangsu, Daihai and Huangqi teem with many different kinds of fish.

1

3

BRIGHT COLOURS AND HOSPITALITY

The Mongolians love to wear long robes of bright colours – red, yellow and dark blue – with a wide body and long sleeves. Neither men's nor women's robes have slits up the sides, like other Chinese style costumes. Red or green silk waist bands hanging loosely are also favoured accessories. Often a meat knife in a beautifully crafted sheath is hung from the waistband. Usually winter robes are made of leather or fur while the summer version is mostly made of cotton cloth.

Knee-high leather boots are most popular. Thick boots made of felt are common winter attire. Many men wear blue, black or brown pointed hats while some favour turbans made of silk. Mongolian women adorn their hair with red or blue scarves in summer, but in winter they wear the same kind of pointed hats as the men. Single girls style their hair into two plaits, decorated with large beads – mostly of jade and agate – and a fringe.

In areas where animal husbandry is the main occupation, beef, mutton and dairy produce are the staple foods, with grains and vegetables less predominant. Dairy products range from milk curd to cheese, butter and yoghurt. A common breakfast includes baked rice and buttered tea – a mixture of tea, butter and salt. Lunch and supper consists mostly of beef or mutton. Mutton is served either in large boiled chunks eaten with bare hands or, roasted. Guests are always offered buttered tea and dairy produce by the hospitable Mongolians.

MOVEABLE HOMES

Typically, the nomadic Mongolian herdsmen live in round tents called yurts, which are easily dismantled and transported. The yurt has a circular frame and an umbrella-shaped roof, and stands at least three metres across and about two to three metres high. Over the frames thick felt is secured with strong wool rope. The roof has a chimney opening which also lets in fresh air and sunlight.

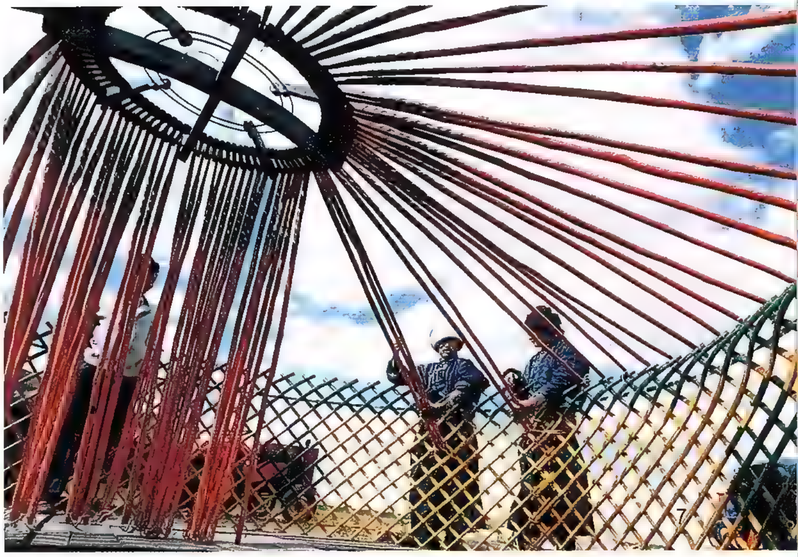
4

In farming areas, and also some regions inhabited by herdsmen, people now live in fixed houses, relinquishing their nomadic past. Mongolian-style yurts made of wood and earth have appeared alongside two- or three-room, single-storey houses similar to those in other parts of the country. These permanent yurts often have windows facing the sun as well as an earthen bed that can be heated from underneath.

SPIRITED RECREATION

Mongolians are very proud of, and often judged on, their equestrian, archery and wrestling skills. They have a special attachment to horses, virtually growing up on horseback. Needless to say, horse racing is a very common and popular event. When bugles sound the start, riders jump onto their horses and dash across the race field like arrows.

Wrestling is also an extremely popular sport and



1. Shepherding (by Shan Xiaogang)
2. Moving to a new grazing site (by Ebo)
3. A Buliat woman (by Guan Zhaoyun)
4. Adornments and costumes of Buliat women (by Bai Zunjiang)
5. Horse-head fiddle, a traditional Mongolian music instrument (by Ebo)
6. Lavish performances are staged during the annual Hulunbuir Nadam. (by Peng Zhenge)
7. Building a yurt (by Ebo)

TALENTED SINGERS AND DANCERS

recreational activity, an integral part of the Mongolian lifestyle. Often men and boys of all ages compete in impromptu matches outside their yurts, showing off their strength and skill. In formal wrestling contests, competitors wear special black vests decorated with copper buttons.

Mongolians have a passion for singing and dancing. Two categories of Mongolian songs – long and short tunes – typify different regions. The long ones with few words, are crisp and melodious, and most popular with people engaged in animal husbandry. The short tunes, noted for their fixed and regular metre, are more often heard in the agricultural regions. *Haolaibao* is the most prevalent folk singing style in Inner Mongolia. The tune is fixed but the words are always created off the cuff and two singers usually chant in an "ask and answer" mode, or alternately, a solo singer performs both functions. In addition, odes, well-wishes, riddles, proverbs, fairy tales, legends and stories are also set to tunes. The horse-head fiddle (so-named for its beautifully carved horse head at the top of the instrument), which produces a low, harmonious sound, and the four-stringed fiddle are the most commonly used Mongolian musical instruments.

Traditional and famous dances include *Horse and Sword, The Erdus, Chopsticks Dance, Buliat Wedding, The Horse Trainer, The Small*

EXCELLENT EQUESTRIANS

Black Horse and Wine Cup. During festival dinners, young men and women often dance, using wine cups and chopsticks as props. Dances associated with horse riding or training, in particular, reflect the Mongolian ethnic lifestyle – dancers boldly raise or wave their hands, in a motion not unlike a rider cracking a whip, or a horse galloping.

The most celebrated festival for the Mongolians is the Nadam – Mongolian for "merriment" – held between July and August every year at the prime animal grazing season in the grasslands. On this occasion, there are breathtaking equestrian competitions, as well as wrestling, archery, chess, song and dance. Everyone attends this event wearing their Sunday best. Wherever these amusements are held, there is a colourful mixture of traditional costumes, noisy horses and bleating sheep and oxen.

HONOURED TRADITIONS

Polygamy is a common practice in Inner Mongolia. Marriage with people of the same family name is not permitted. More often than not, marriage is arranged by the parents, usually with expensive engagement gifts given to the girl's family. A dowry must also be provided for the bride. Local custom dictates that in the wedding ceremony the bride and bridegroom gallop across the grassland in the morning and then receive toasts from the guests. In some areas, the tradition of "snatching the bride" still exists. There are a few isolated cases in some areas where men and women have common-law marriages, and their children take the surname of the "husband". Women are normally "taken into" the man's family upon marriage, but in western regions the practice of men marrying into women's families occurs. Such men are then entitled to their wives' families' properties after a certain time. In the eastern part, however, it is entirely different and husbands would never be regarded as members of their wives' families.

Once young men are married, they move outside their nuclear family, usually living in yurts nearby their parents. In farming and semi-nomadic areas, there are extended families consisting of several brothers and their wives.

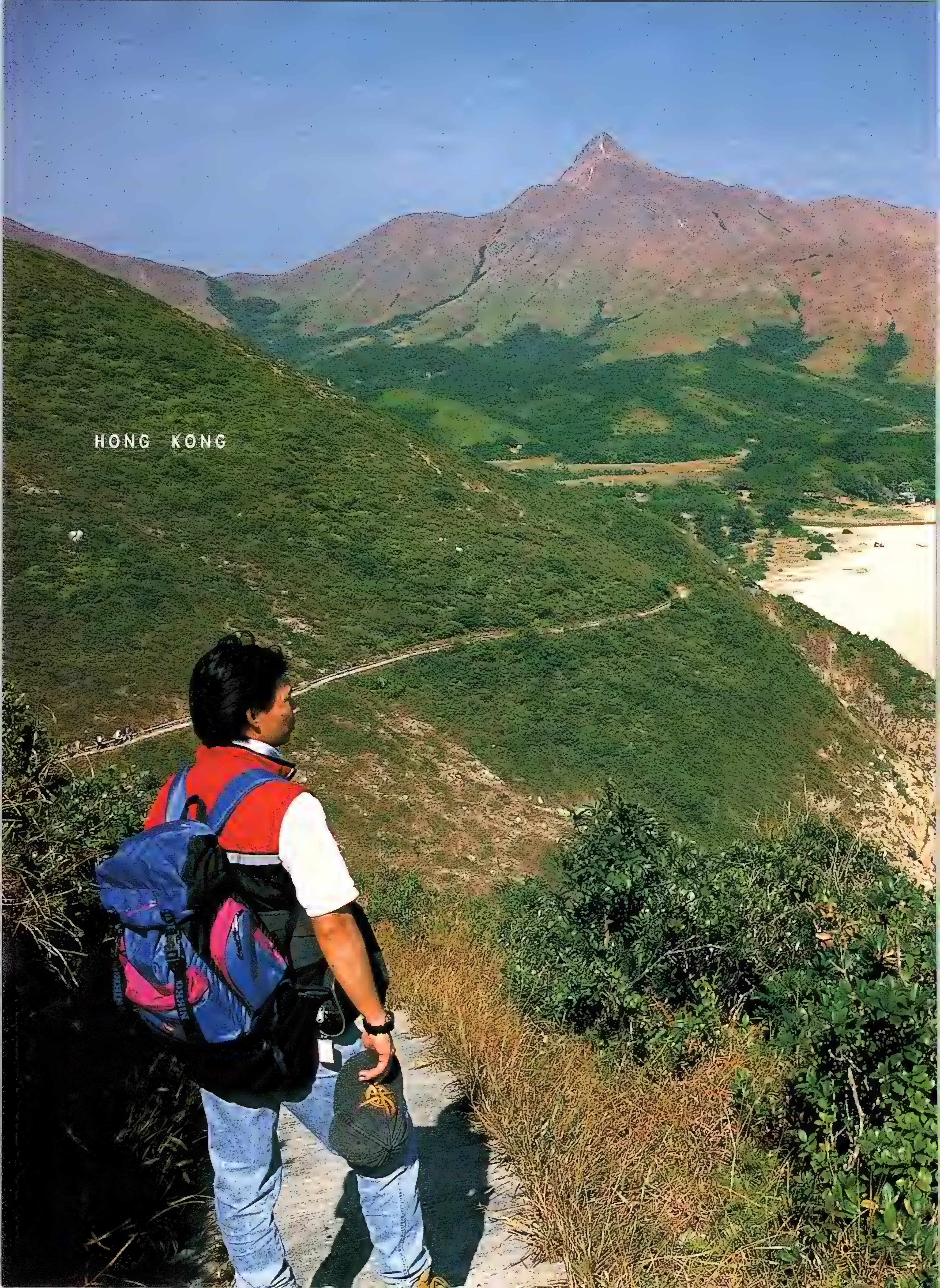
Originally devotees of the ancient religion of Shamanism, Mongolians were converted to Lamaism in the 13th century during the Yuan Dynasty. In everyday life events such as relocation, marriage, birth, sickness and death, they often ask advice from the lamas. Since the Mongolians live in an extended area and often in mixed communities with other ethnic groups, a small portion of them also practise Catholicism, Islam, Buddhism and Taoism.

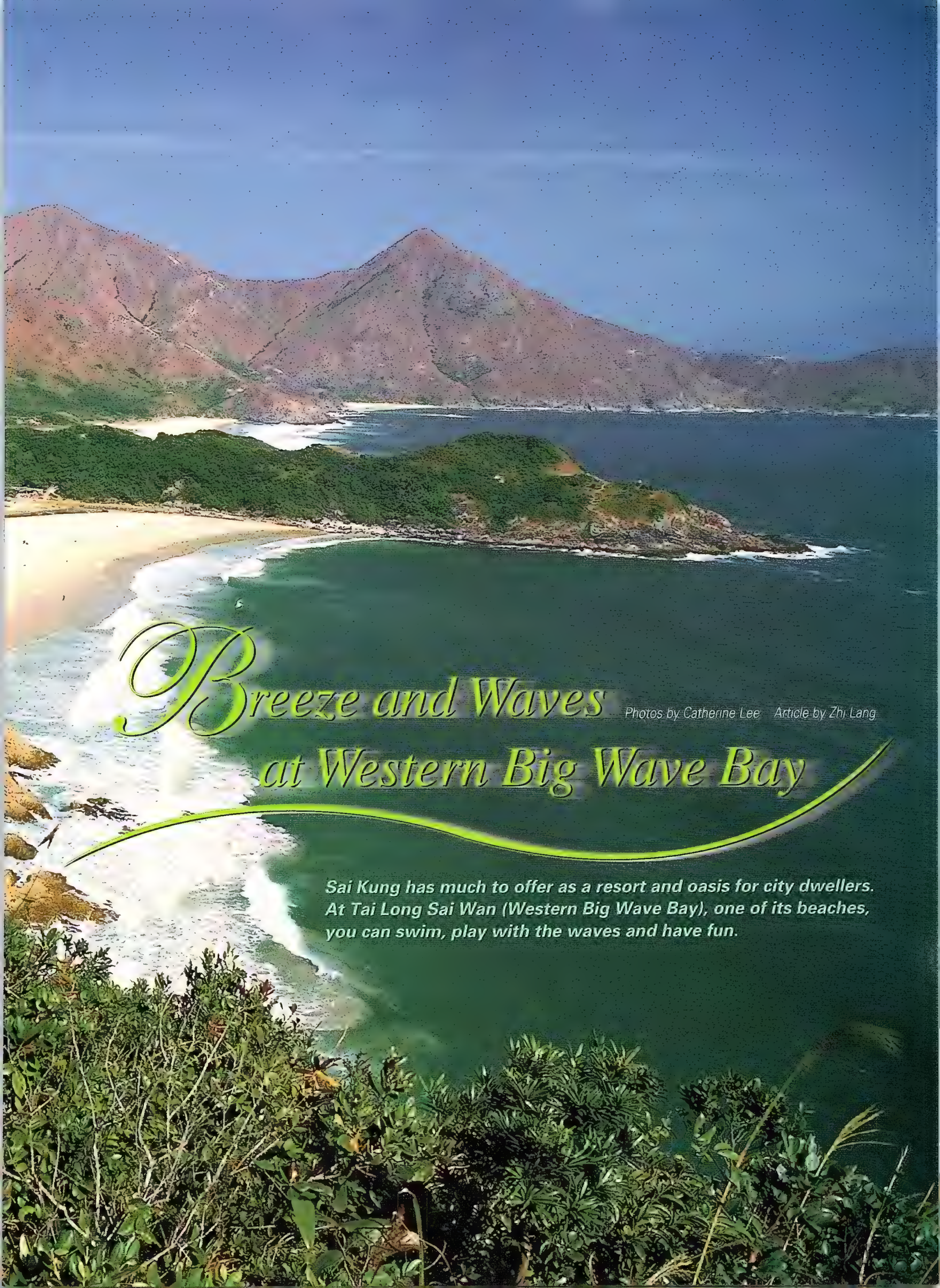
Deceased Mongolians are buried, cremated or left in the wilderness. In the western grasslands, leaving the dead in the wilderness is most common. According to this custom, the deceased is placed on a wooden-wheeled cart and driven around; once the body drops from the cart, it is left at that spot in the wilderness and expected to be eaten by wolves and eagles. Thus the soul of the deceased will go to heaven. If after seven days the body still lies where it dropped, it is a bad omen. Then the family must make donations to the temple and ask lamas to recite prayers to prevent the dead from encountering disaster.

The Mongolian language, consisting of three dialects – Inner Mongolia, Weilat and Barhubliat – descends from the Altay language family. In the early 13th century, the Mongolians created their own script and, after several reforms over the hundred years into the early 14th century, the written language finally took its present form.

Translated by F. Huang

1. A man of the Mongolian ethnic group (by Cui Hancheng)
2. Bow shooting is a popular sport among the Mongolians. (by Peng Zhenge)
3. Horse racing – the Mongolian way (by Peng Zhenge)
4. Characteristic Mongolian wrestling (by Peng Zhenge)
5. A Mongolian bride dressing up for her wedding (by Ebo)
6. Mongolian children (by Bai Zunjiang)


HONG KONG



Breeze and Waves at Western Big Wave Bay

Photos by Catherine Lee Article by Zhi Lang

Sai Kung has much to offer as a resort and oasis for city dwellers. At Tai Long Sai Wan (Western Big Wave Bay), one of its beaches, you can swim, play with the waves and have fun.

Previous page: A complete view of Salt Field Bay from Maclehose Trail Section 2.

1. Surfing in Salted Field Bay (by So Long Chi)
2. The wide beach at Western Big Wave Bay
3. High Island Reservoir
4. Spellbound by the beauty of High Island Reservoir

In Sai Kung there are four bays within Tai Long Wan (Big Wave Bay): Dong Wan (Eastern Bay), Tai Wan (Grand Bay), Ham Tin Wan (Salt Field Bay) and Tai Long Sai Wan (Western Big Wave Bay). All the bays are set against a background of hills: Mai Fun (Rice Flour) Peak, Nam She Tsim (Boa Constrictor Peak), Tai Mun (Big Mosquito) Hill and Sai Wan (Western Bay) Hill. Waves continuously lap the expansive sandy beaches of each bay .

Nevertheless, there are at least three other beaches in Hong Kong also called "Tai Long Wan". So, be careful when making appointments with your friends!

An Isolated and Secluded Bay

Starting from Chui Fung Au, a short walk leads to a pavilion with a sign board reading, "Sai Wan: 2.5 kilometres". It means almost an hour's walk on a winding path through the forest. The path is so narrow that only one person can pass at a time, and groups of hikers have to thin out in a long line. Before long the High Island Reservoir comes into sight. The reservoir is a vast expanse of bluish green bordered by slopes of yellow earth. When the water glistens with the summer breeze, the reservoir looks like a sparkling blue gemstone inlaid in a gold ring. From the rim of the reservoir at Chui Tung Au, one can have a glimpse of the Western Big Wave Bay. The view so inviting that one runs down the slope to the beach.

An Ideal Resort

At Western Big Wave Bay there are several outdoor cafes where one can enjoy the sea view along with the fresh sea air. Enterprising staff have built a playground at a appropriate distance from the cafes so that the relaxed air will not be spoilt by boisterous children – an ideal setting for both adults and kids to while away the time.

A barefoot stroll on the beach is another delight. The sand is so fine that just walking on it feels like that one's soles are being gently massaged. Sunbathers' immobility is sure testimony to its soothing softness.

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The bay is flanked by two hills, which act as windbreaks for the beach. The water at the bay is so calm that one can hardly get wet walking knee-deep in the water. Stretching from the middle of the beach out into the sea is a long line of rocks and reefs – a popular rendezvous for lovers. Listening to the sound of waves, caressed by the breezes and whispering words of love, the couples make an enviable sight.

On the way to Ham Tin Bay

The second section of the Maclehose Trail winds its way into Salt Field Bay. The walk along this trail affords a full view of the meandering coastline of Big Wave Bay. The water in this secluded bay is brilliant blue with reefs clearly visible. The pounding of the waves against the beach echoes up to the trail. After a short walk, Boa Constrictor Peak emerges into view. The highest in Sai Kung, the peak stands proudly, towering over the bay.

Surfers' Paradise

It takes an hour's walk to reach Salt Field Bay. The beach there is wider than the one at Western Big Wave Bay and the sea

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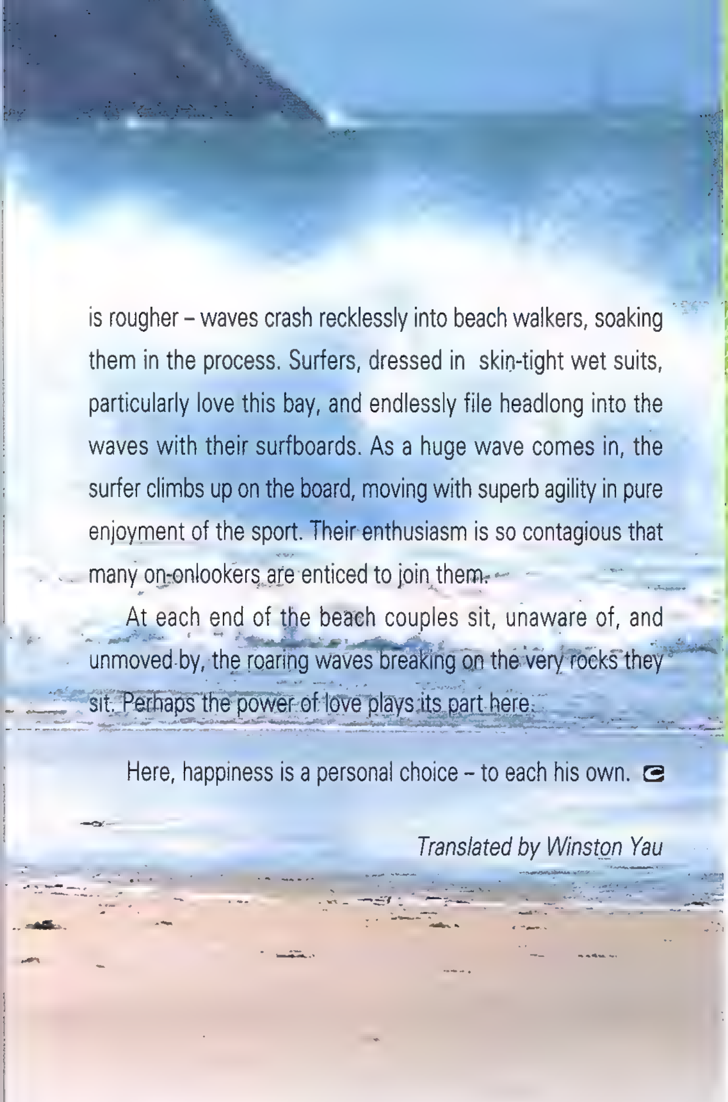
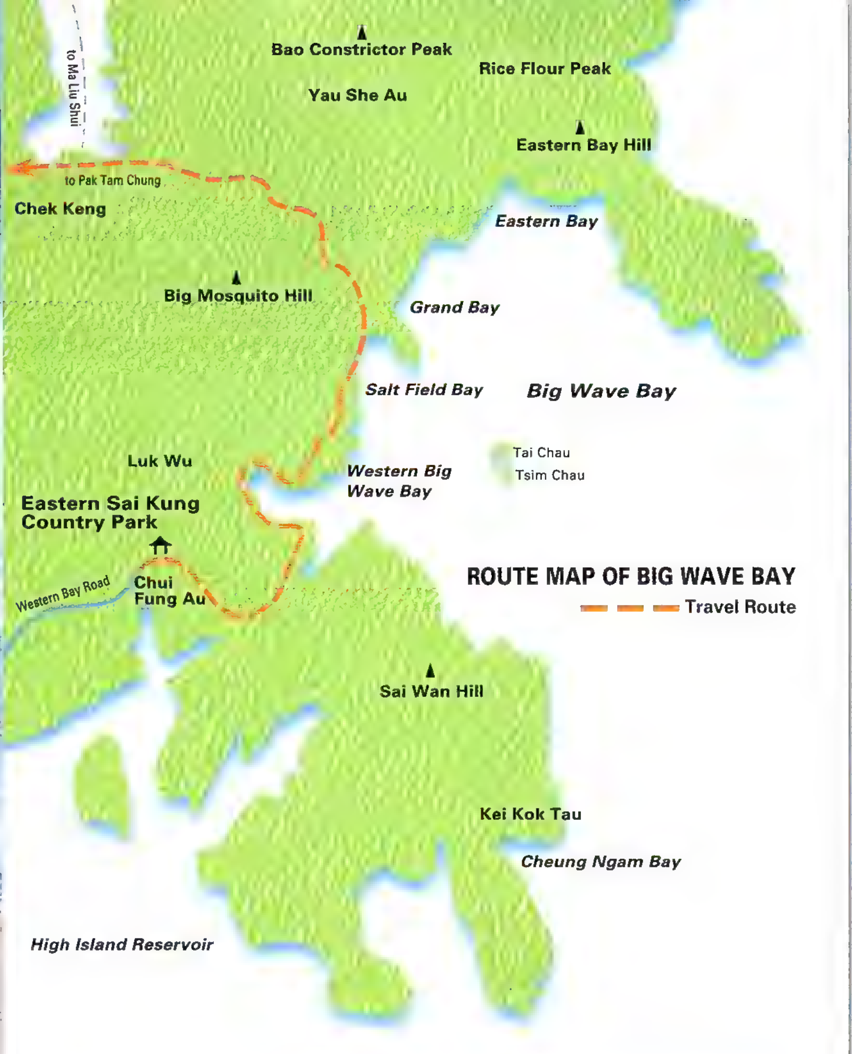


is rougher – waves crash recklessly into beach walkers, soaking them in the process. Surfers, dressed in skin-tight wet suits, particularly love this bay, and endlessly file headlong into the waves with their surfboards. As a huge wave comes in, the surfer climbs up on the board, moving with superb agility in pure enjoyment of the sport. Their enthusiasm is so contagious that many on-onlookers are enticed to join them.

At each end of the beach couples sit, unaware of, and unmoved by, the roaring waves breaking on the very rocks they sit. Perhaps the power of love plays its part here.

Here, happiness is a personal choice – to each his own.

Translated by Winston Yau


to Ma Liu Shui
Bao Constrictor Peak
Rice Flour Peak
Yau She Au
Eastern Bay Hill
to Pak Tam Chung
Chek Keng
Eastern Bay
Big Mosquito Hill
Grand Bay
Salt Field Bay
Big Wave Bay
Luk Wu
Western Big Wave Bay
Tai Chau
Tsim Chau
Eastern Sai Kung Country Park
Western Bay Road
Chui Fung Au
ROUTE MAP OF BIG WAVE BAY
Travel Route
Sai Wan Hill
Kei Kok Tau
Cheung Ngam Bay
High Island Reservoir

Tips for the Traveller

Itinerary: Sai Kung → Chui Fung Au → Western Big Wave Bay → Salt Field Bay → Chek Keng

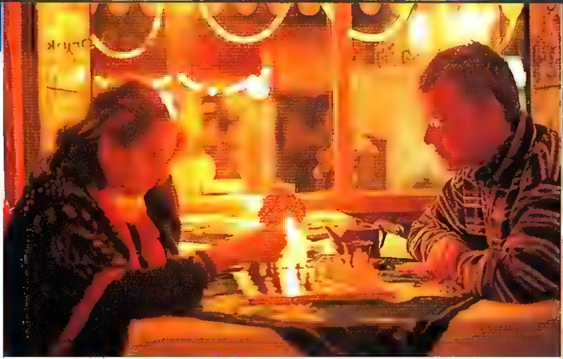
Transport: There is no bus service between the bus terminus in Sai Kung and Chui Fung Au. Travellers can only get there on foot. Nevertheless, it is possible to take a private van which runs from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. Next to the pavilion in Chui Fung Au is a trail leading to Sai Wan Hill which takes about an hour. At the west end of Sai Wan Hill is the second section of the Maclehose Trail that leads to Salt Field Bay. It takes about 45 minutes to complete the trip. In Salt Field Bay, near a food stall, the same trail leads back to Chek Keng, about an hour's walk. A ferry departs from the pier in Chek Keng near the hostel, at 4:45 p.m. for Ma Liu Shui. This ferry, however, runs only on Sundays; there is no service the rest of the week. If you miss the ferry, your alternative is to continue walking along the same section of the Maclehose Trail to Pak Tam Road where Bus No.94 passes on its way back to the bus terminus in Sai Kung.

Conditions: The trails are clear and suitable for people of all ages. The altitude varies – from Western Big Wave Bay to Salt Field Bay it is only 100 metres and from Salt Field Bay to Chek Keng via Tai Long Au it is 200 metres.

Suggestions for outing: Morning in Western Big Wave Bay, afternoon in Salt Field Bay. You may have lunch at either of the bays.

Note: Swimmers must be careful because there are no lifeguards at the beaches.

1. The raging waves at Salt Field Bay
2. Chek Keng
3. Posing on the rocks
4. The Yellow Stone Park at Big Wave Bay (by Huang Yanhong)



Picturesque Dali

Xie Guanghui

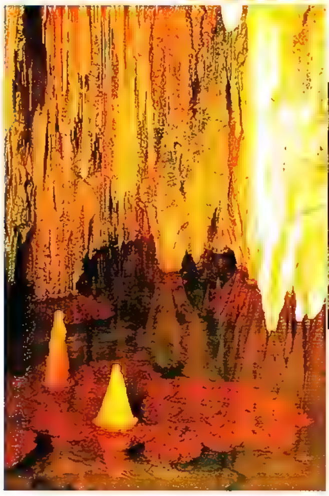
In our next issue's HIGHLIGHTS, you will read about ***Dali*** *in Southwest China's Yunnan Province – the ancient town, the surrounding fishing village, and the traditional batik making. And yet the area is also overflowing with foreign visitors anxious to stay. Our DISCOVERIES will tell you the story of an expedition team who spent 50 days walking through the* ***Great Canyon on the Tibetan Plateau****. Not floods, nor unsteady rope bridges, nor spending the night in caves stopped them from exploring the canyon's secrets.*

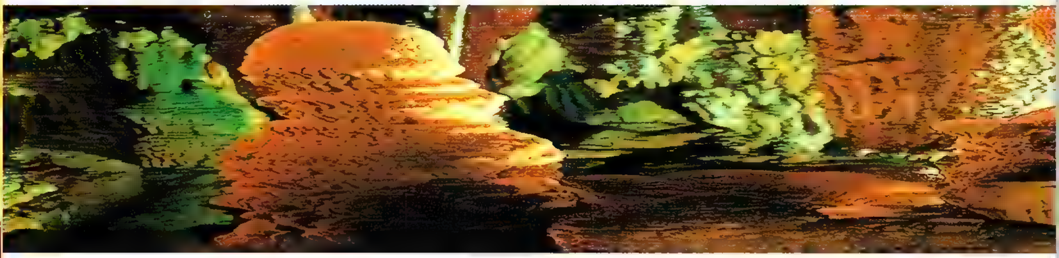
The Great Canyon on the Tibetan Plateau

Huang Yanhong

Furong Cave

Xie Guanghui

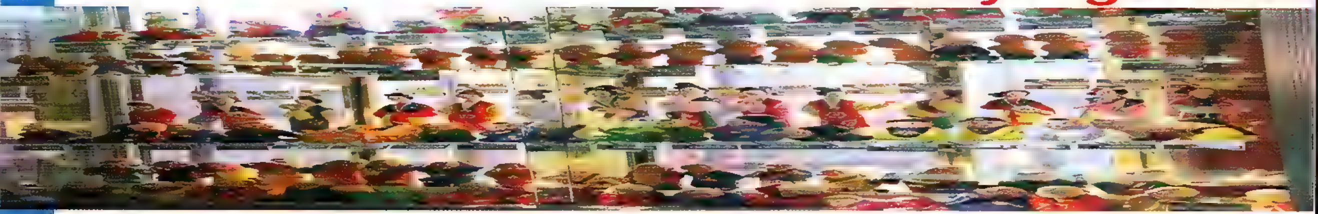




Though many people have visited the fascinating caves in Guilin, Guangxi, few have heard of ***Furong Cave*** *in Sichuan Province. Our LANDSCAPES will give you a chance to explore this extraordinary cave, where once inside you must follow your guide carefully to avoid getting lost. Tianjin, a city rich in folklore, is home to one of the world's most famous traditional art forms.* ***Zhang's Clay Figurines*** *are highly acclaimed in their unique technique of expression in countless vivid characters.*

Zhang's Clay Figurines

Shan Xiaogang



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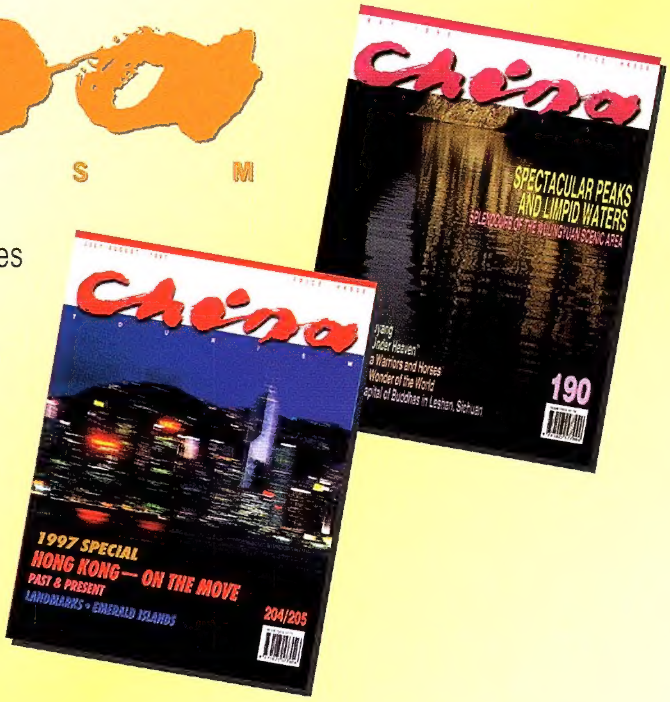

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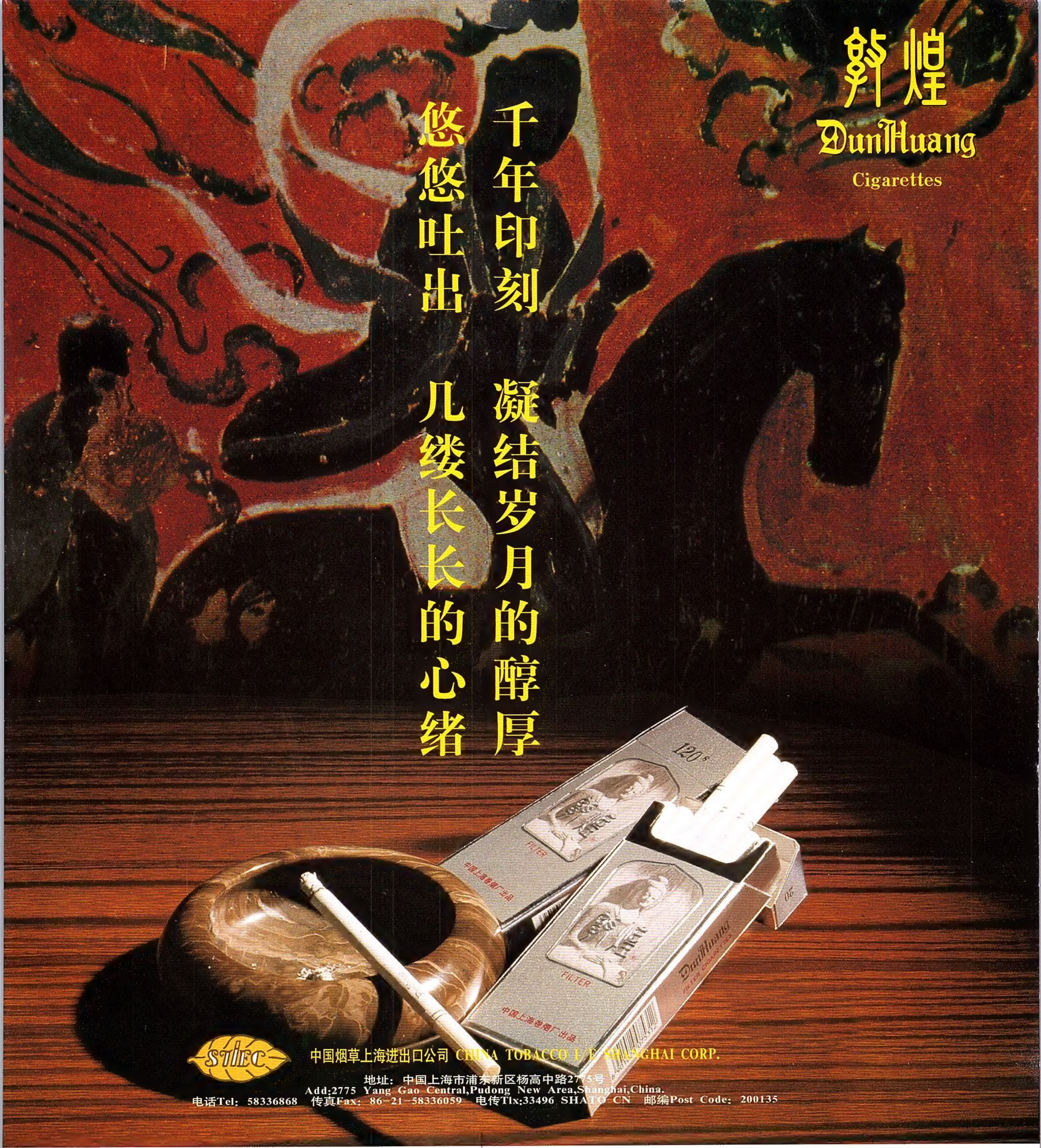
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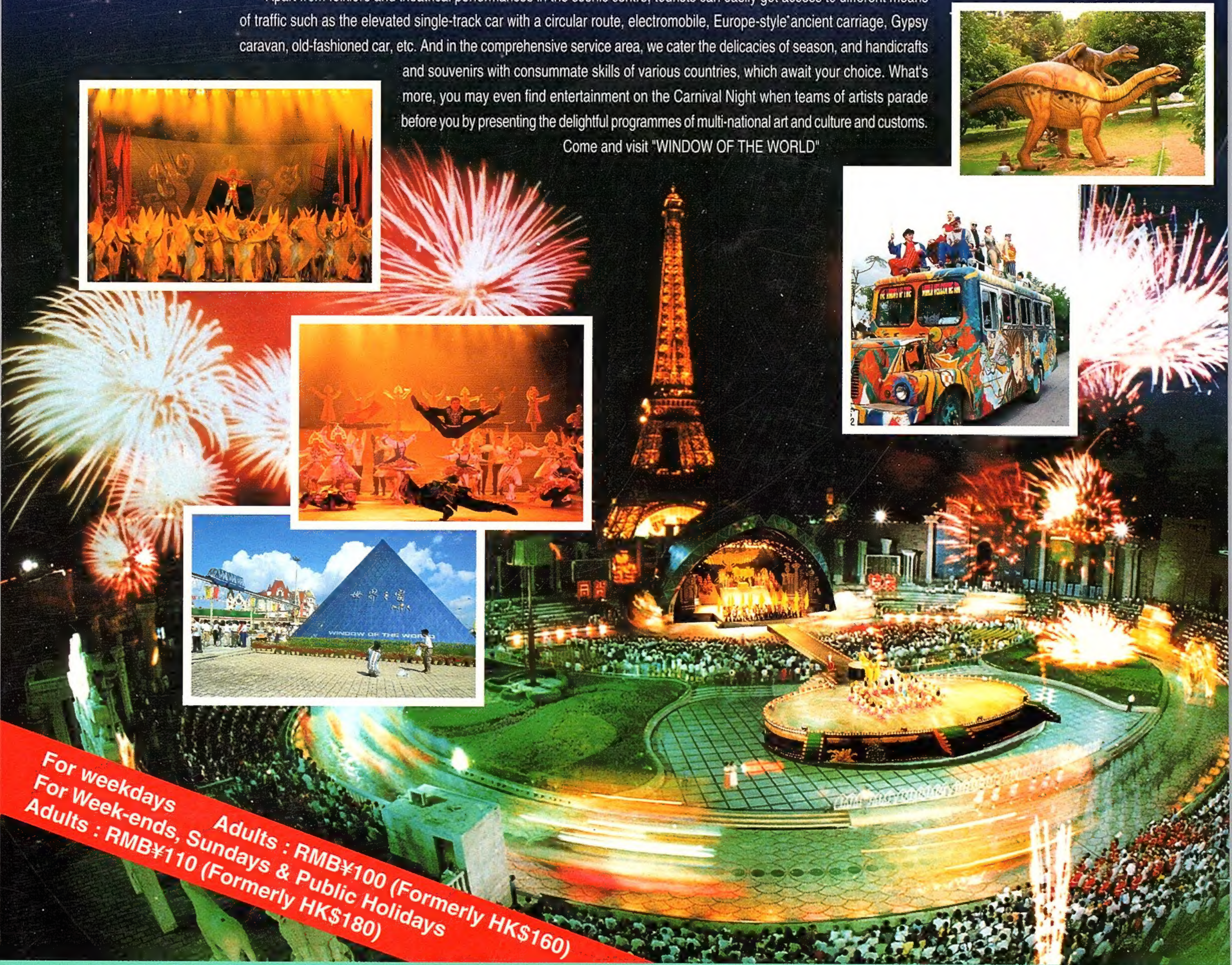

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